# Nancy Drake

By Aimée Ingersoll

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NANCY DRAKE

# NANCY DRAKE

BY

AIMÉE INGERSOLL

"It is a question, after all, whether the little frequent joys of life do not total a better sum of satisfaction than the rare ecstasies which make so great a demand upon our human limitations, and leave such void behind."

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T. C. LOTHIAN, 49 ELIZABETH STREET

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## CHAPTER I.

The Unexpected

## THE UNEXPECTED.

Not as the songs of other lands,
Her song shall be;
Where dim, her purple shoreland stands,
Above the sea!

George Essex Evans.

Drake's cottage—just Drake's cottage—nothing more, and so it will be known for many long years to come!

Drake's cottage, with the poplars standing on guard, planted when Drake built his cottage some thirty odd years ago; still they stand on by the house and the little white bridge by the river. This autumn evening, the sun is taking farewell of the day, throwing long shadows of the golden poplars on the river below.

Drake, the old skipper, who has made his home in this sweet spot, must have had the artistic sense born in him, and not obliterated all those years when his home was on the rolling deep, nay, rather cultivated, for who can live with Nature without becoming a lover of her, and

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these men who plough the seas know the wonders of the deep.

As Ruskin says, "Nature is spread out like a legible language upon the broad face of the unsleeping ocean." How the old sailor would have laughed had he been told he had artistic tastes, but there was no doubt the man must have been a lover of the beautiful in Nature to choose this spot in which to build his home overlooking the reach of the river, with the great mountains in the far distance.

This particular autumn afternoon Captain Drake is seated on the verandah, enjoying his after-dinner smoke. Beside him on a small table is an old leaden box that once was most wonderfully moulded and painted. The handle that had formerly been the shape of a man's head, with use had become so flattened and bent that it was hard for anyone not having known it in its youth to imagine a man's head had ever been there.

By the side of the leaden tobacco-box stood a long tumbler with an old-fashioned silver sugar-crusher in it, for the Captain was getting old now, and liked his whiskey and water hot.

The Unexpected

Captain Drake was sitting thinking of his sea-faring days, and of the wife he loved so well, who was now waiting for him in the other land, when his thoughts were broken by his grand-daughter calling to him:—

"Look, grandfather, look! What craft is that coming up the river? I don't remember seeing her before."

"Ay, child, ay. My old eyes are bad, or I am pretty sure that's the same old craft I was skipper of thirty years ago. Quick, girl, quick, get me my glasses, for it is a sight to make my old eyes grow young again. Strange, yes, it is strange! For that's the very 'Mary Jane,' as I was mate of, and then skipper, thirty years ago! It's getting dusk, Nancy, or we would row across to the wharf, and have a look at her. It puzzles me to know why she's come out here. Yet, now I remember, the Harbour Master told me an old craft had been bought for a coal-hulk—so the 'Mary Jane' has come to end her days, like her old skipper, on this side of the world. Wonderful! Wonderful! Isn't it, dear?"

Nancy was anxious to get her grand-

The Unexpected

father into the cottage, for the damp was rising from the river. As the light gradually faded out of the western sky, Captain Drake withdrew to the cheery brightness of his sitting-room, where a glorious wood fire shed its genial warmth.

The Captain and Nancy lived together with their one faithful maid, who had nursed Nancy as a baby. Drake's Cottage and all its surroundings were beautiful, but the most beautiful of all was the skipper's grand-daughter—just emerging from girlhood to womanhood; of more than medium height, erect and proud, with a dignity beyond her years, and a face that grew more beautiful the longer one looked at it. Such was Nancy Drake.

Nancy inherited her dark-blue eyes from the old man, with their beautiful expression of goodness and truth. Anyone looking either at grandfather or at grand-daughter would have trusted them with an unlimited trust.

Captain Drake often thought what a treasure Nancy was to him, and prayed the good God to spare him until she could do without him. He had deeply loved the girl's mother, his only child, who had

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married her sailor cousin (he being also a Drake), who was wrecked before his baby girl was born. When Nancy's mother was dying, she had said, "Father, you will have only Nancy now, and I know you will be both father and mother to her, and she will be all to you." So grandfather and grand-daughter were most dear to each other.

As so often happens at the change of the tide, the wind got up and blew a perfect hurricane. The rain came down in sheets. It almost seemed as if Drake's Cottage must be blown into the river.

The old man sat by the fire, while Nancy was helping to prepare their evening meal, thinking as he smoked of those days when he was on the "Mary Jane," and feeling thankful that he was sitting by a big fire under a comfortable roof, instead of facing the angry elements in his oilskin as of yore.

Nancy had just placed the supper on the table when they were startled by a sudden rapping on the door.

"Come in, come in," said the old man, but Nancy, who was rather afraid, said,

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"Stop, grandfather, stop. Let us go and see who can be there."

Together they went to the door, but could scarcely open it, the wind nearly blowing them away.

"Excuse me," said a man's voice, "but may I come in? I am drenched to the skin, and, seeing the light, I ventured to ask for shelter and a shakedown."

"Come in, and welcome," said Captain Drake, "and we will see what we can do for you. Such a dirty night is not fit for a dog to be out in. Nancy, tell Kate to show the gentleman into the spare room, and to take him some of my clothes for a change. There will be plenty of room in them. Not what you call a good fit, you know, but dry and taut at any rate. Hurry up, sir, and then we shall all have our supper together."

Nancy did as her grandfather wished.

She laid an extra place at the table, and they waited for the unexpected guest, who did not detain them long, and laughed so heartily at his appearance in the Captain's clothes, that they could only join in the laughter with him; for there

was plenty of room, as the old man had said.

"Well, well, bless my soul!" said Captain Drake, "you must put on more flesh, sir, to fill out these sails. That reminds me, what do you say to a drop of whiskey before you begin to eat? Just to keep off a chill, you know."

The stranger accepted the spirits, and felt warm and comfortable. He thought it was time to explain how he came to be in such a fix, but the Captain would not hear a word until Jack Hethersett had fully satisfied his inner man; then he told them how he had been cycling about the island, when he was overtaken by the rain, and ventured to ask for the hospitality which had been so generously given to him.

Jack thought to himself that he was in luck's way to come in for such a good thing, and in his heart blessed the rain for sending him to seek such a shelter. He felt certain that he had never seen a more lovely girl than Nancy; he also admired the old skipper immensely. After supper, while Nancy was helping to clear away, Jack and Captain Drake drew their arm-

The Unexpected

chairs on either side of the big log fire, and smoked away to their hearts' content.

The rain had fallen so heavily that even the contents of Jack's pocket were wet, and he had to take the tobacco out of his pouch and put it down on the hearth to dry; but the old man, having plenty, was glad to share it with the interesting stranger.

Captain Drake told Jack how a strange craft had come up the river, and how certain he felt it was his own old "Mary Jane."

"Bless my soul, sir!" he said, "I feel like a boy about her, so anxious to go off to the port to see if my eyes have deceived me or not."

Jack was most interested in the old man's yarns, but wondered how much longer Nancy was going to remain out of the room. However, he made himself very pleasant to Captain Drake.

At last Nancy appeared with her basket and needlework, and took her seat close to her grandfather's chair. As the lamp-light shone on them both, Jack thought he had never seen a more hand-

The Unexpected

some pair. He had been going from place to place to look for the beautiful, but here, in the most unexpected way, he had come upon the perfection of beauty.

As some one has said:—"We lay playful hands on each loose end of life, to weave a cradle from it for the idle hours; to find dismayed when we cast it off, our fingers wound in the inextricable web of Fate."

Journeys end in Lovers' Meetings

## CHAPTER II.

## "JOURNEYS END IN LOVERS' MEETINGS."

Oft in the stilly night,
E'er slumber's chain hath bound me,
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me.

Tom Moore.

The next morning was an ideal one; the rain-drops (still glistening on the branches of the trees) turned into diamonds by the brilliant sunshine; the purple shadows on the river, with the strong reflections of the white bridge, and the golden poplars in their autumn glory. Just at the bend of the river a hawthorn hedge, some fifteen feet high, covered with its red berries, added to the brilliant reflection in the river.

Jack could see all this from the sitting-room of the cottage, also the tall poplars on the other side of the river, with their background of fir trees. The river being at low tide, the shore was one mass of gold, with the violet shadows of the trees

thrown thereon; the river, as it deepened in the centre, being of a brilliant turquoise blue.

Jack thought he had scarcely ever seen so beautiful a view. He stepped on to the verandah to take in a wider expanse. From there he could see the ships at the wharf, the river flowing swiftly into the sea, and the huge waves dancing with delight, where the sea and river met.

Jack loved his old English home, but he felt this quiet little island, with its glorious colouring, was very hard to beat. His thoughts were broken by Captain Drake calling to him that breakfast was ready.

Jack, who thought Nancy lovely by last night's light, could not fail to do so this morning. She wore a rose-coloured print gown, with a dainty muslin apron. Her dark brown hair was arranged loosely in a Grecian coil, to intensify the beauty of her deep blue eyes.

To a man of Jack's artistic senses, such a glory and wealth of colouring was enough to make him forget all about material things. This, however, he was not allowed to do. The Captain was full of

Journeys end in Lovers' Meetings

the visit he intended paying to the "Mary Jane." He had to wait until high tide, so, to pass the time, he told Jack yarns about his old sea-faring days; also of his father's adventures as a commander in the King's Navy when the English and French were at war.

He told Jack that his father was taken prisoner by the French, and, for ten years, was confined in a dungeon; that the mother, not knowing what had become of her husband, had thought him dead. Also the old skipper told Jack that he was a Devonshire man, and was descended from Sir Francis Drake, that valiant sailor and gentleman in the days of good Queen Bess.

At noon the tide was high, so the Captain, Nancy, and Jack rowed over to the "Mary Jane"—for the "Mary Jane" it really was.

Nancy and Jack thought very little of the craft, but the old man showed Nancy where her grandmother used to sit in the saloon, and on deck. He seemed just brimming over with love for all its old memories. Truth to tell, Jack and Nancy were very glad to get away from the old

Journeys end in Lovers' Meetings

ship, and to go for a row up that most lovely river. Jack took both oars, Nancy steered, Captain Drake smoked away, and talked of the days when he was young.

After rowing some miles up the river, they moored the boat, took out their luncheon basket, and boiled the billy. Jack enjoyed his first real billy tea. Nancy showed him the correct way to swing the billy off the fire after the water has boiled, and the bag of tea has been dropped into it. Jack declared he had never tasted such tea in his life before!

As they sat drinking their tea, Jack told them that he had two sisters at home, and that he was an only son, and gave such a description of his father, Sir Philip Hethersett, his young stepmother, and his ancestral home, Hethersett Hall, that both Nancy and her grandfather were interested. Jack said that he had just left the 'Varsity—Cambridge, the true and proper University for all men of the Eastern Counties—how, for generations past, there had always been a Hethersett at Trinity College, Cambridge. He had wished himself—and his father

Journeys end in Lovers' Meetings

quite agreed with him—that he should travel and see the world, before settling down to the political life that he hoped to enter in the future; for they both thought with Tennyson:—

> Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
> And the thoughts of men are widened by the process of the suns.

All this Jack told to Captain Drake and Nancy, this glorious autumn afternoon, with the magpies singing their joyous notes, the slender branches of the gum-trees waving to and fro in the sunlight, the soft, beautiful gulls skimming the river, and here and there on the water-posts a cormorant or two keeping their death-like watch for the fish below. Still, again, on the opposite side of the river, the golden sands, shimmering as if real gold in the strong sunshine, and intensified by the pale amethyst tints, shaded with gold, of the mountains beyond—the Blue Tier, as they are called—truly a brilliant blue at times, but to-day amethyst and gold.

"Time and tide wait for no man"—so the Captain reminded them that if they wished to have shelter for the night, they

Journeys end in Lovers' Meetings

must all go aboard at once. Nancy begged to have an oar, and Jack at last gave her one. He soon found that Nancy was an expert oarswoman. She looked so lovely with the wind blowing her curly hair about, and giving her cheeks such a beautiful colour, that Jack felt intoxicated with the beauty of the whole scene. This was only one of the beautiful days to come. The sun was sinking fast, the tide was on the turn, as they moored their boat at the landing place.

Nancy heard the cows calling for her, as it was long past their usual milking time. She never liked anyone but herself to milk them, for Nancy loved the dear, patient creatures, and they, in their way, returned her love, knowing and feeling as all animals do when they are loved and treated in a sympathetic human way.

Nancy was soon at work, with her big apron covering her frock, and the cows, each in her turn, giving the milk so freely to the sweet maid who relieved her overfull udder.

These cows, which were such pets of Nancy's, were worthy of being so, for

Journeys end in Lovers' Meetings

were they not as handsome as they could be, with the deep flank, the straight back, the well-formed udder of the good milking cow, and the beautiful shaped head, with the full soft eye of the well-bred and good-mannered cow.

Jack longed to have his canvas and paints ready to paint such a pastoral scene, for he felt here was an ideal picture for Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles."

The day of violet and gold was passing away, but dying a lingering death, for the sinking sun, as he said good-night, lighted up the poplars with an effulgent warmth, and threw their warm shadows over Nancy and the cows.

As Jack helped Nancy carry the overflowing bucket into the dairy, he was sorry that such a day had ended, and thought how he would sleep to-night and dream with Sir Philip Sidney that he was in Arcadia.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE INEVITABLE.

The Inevitable

It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, with a ho, with a hey nonny no.

So Will Shakespeare wrote many a long year ago, and so it will be to the end of the chapter of this world's history. Love's young dream—too intoxicating a dream to last long—and only Nature in sympathy with it all, for even those who in their youth have felt it, forget all the romance of it in their practical middle-age; only the ultra-romantic feel that they would like to still live it over again.

Jack awoke the next morning, having lived in his dreams in Arcadia, but realising that he must not over-step the bounds of the hospitality that had been so graciously accorded to him.

After breakfast, while he and the Captain smoked their morning pipe, he thanked his host for the pleasant time he had spent, but said he must return to the

The Inevitable

township, whence he had cycled that wet evening. Captain Drake would not hear of his guest leaving him so soon, and told him to write for his luggage to be sent to him, and asked him to remain with them until he wished to leave the island. Jack—only too happy to remain—did as the Captain suggested, and took out of his pocket a letter of introduction from Mr. Morton, the rector of Hethersett to the rector of a small town close to where he now was. Captain Drake said he knew Mr. Wilson well, and that Jack and he would row there in the afternoon, wind and weather permitting.

"Lor' bless my soul, lad," he said, "I don't want any introductions. An old salt, such as I am, has seen too much of human nature not to know a true honest gentleman when he sees one."

Jack often thought that Captain Drake resembled his ideal hero in fiction in many points, Thackeray's "Colonel Newcombe" —Thackeray's Colonel being indeed a higher type of man, more polished, but in kindliness of disposition and in character, the likeness between the Colonel and Cap-

tain Drake was striking to a student of human nature, such as Jack was fast becoming. So anyone who travels much cannot fail to become, for nothing enlarges the mind of man more than seeing new countries and different nationalities.

One afternoon, Jack, Nancy, and Captain Drake packed up their afternoon tea, not forgetting the billy, and started off for the little town where Mr. Wilson, to whom Jack had the letter of introduction, lived. It would take them a good hour and a half to row there, and they were not sure of finding him at home, so they intended having their tea on the river bank on their return journey.

Nancy and her grandfather remained in the boat while Jack went into the township to search Mr. Wilson out. Much to Nancy's delight, Jack soon returned to them, not having found Mr. Wilson at home.

How glorious that time on the river was! Such a perfectly sunshiny afternoon, and the sands of the river shimmering like gold, here and there the cormorant still keeping his death-watch.

Up one of the reaches of the river they

The Inevitable

rowed, and, having fastened the boat to a tree, they carried their hamper to a shady spot. Jack and Nancy soon collected enough sticks to light a fire, and Captain Drake put the billy on to boil, while Jack and Nancy wandered about at their own sweet will, until the Captain's whistle told them that tea was ready. They joined him and laughed and talked, all three of them, forgetting even time and tide in their enjoyment of the present.

How often in the years to come did Jack and Nancy talk of that lovely afternoon on the little island!

As Jack helped Nancy out of the boat that evening, he fancied she left her hand longer than usual in his. The thrill it gave him was intense; he felt that he must soon tell her how much he loved her, and ask her to be his wife, and return to England with him. Yet he felt it would be difficult to ask her to leave her grandfather, and he feared the old man would not care to leave the little island where the wife of his youth, and Nancy's mother, his only child, were buried.

However, Jack thought, "Faint heart

The Inevitable

never won fair lady," and so resolved that evening to tell Captain Drake of his great desire to make Nancy his wife. He wondered how the old man would take it; little did he guess that the Captain already knew which way the wind blew, so he was not taken by storm, as Jack feared he would be.

When Jack spoke to him that evening, the old man admired the open, manly way the young fellow told his tale, and felt that here indeed was a man who was worthy of his sweet grandchild, and, without hesitation, gave his consent to Jack wooing Nancy for his bride. The only question that troubled him was whether Jack's father would think Nancy quite the wife for his son, who would eventually succeed to his estates and position in the county.

These fears Jack soon dispersed, explaining to Captain Drake what a fine, large-hearted, liberal-minded man his father was, one who would value Nancy for her own sweet sake. He said that he felt very selfish in robbing the Captain of his sweet grand-daughter, but he

The Inevitable

hoped that he would return to England with them.

The old man stayed up talking to Jack far into the night, telling him of the places he would re-visit. He said that Jack must lend Nancy to him to go over some of these old scenes, spots in Epping Forest, he had loved as a boy, and the meadows over which he used to walk from Buckhurst Hill to his old school at Chigwell.

It was difficult to say who was the more excited, the old man or the young one. At last they parted for the night, the Captain, with tears in his eyes, wishing Jack good luck on the morrow. Jack felt too excited to sleep that night, and looked forward to a long walk with Nancy the next afternoon, when he would find out his fate. But Jack knew, oh yes, he knew, as real lovers ever do, that love was great between them, and there was no fear, but joy, the joy of certainty in his heart.

## CHAPTER IV.

## ARCADIAN DAYS.



Love is ever busy with his shuttle,
Is ever weaving into Life's dull warp
Bright, gorgeous flowers and scenes Arcadian.

Longfellow.

Why did she love him? Curious fool! Be still.
Is human love the growth of human will!

Byron.

Nancy felt, on awakening the next morning, a strange sensation as if the atmosphere, the grass, the trees, the birds, and everything were quivering with an excess of life. There are times in one's life when one feels like this, as if one is uplifted on the wings of atmosphere or space far above the regular monotony of daily life.

Love's young dream! What a blissful dream it is; how elevating to the character, so pure, so unselfish, so altogether heavenly a thing it is! Love comes direct from Heaven, pure, unselfish, undefiled. After Love comes Passion, and soils the wings of Love. Only those who love

Arcadian Days

young know what pure love is. Nancy felt this pure love for the man who now seemed part of her being. Time alone and knowledge would sully that love with the passion that must creep in while we are here on earth.

As Nancy dressed that morning, her whole frame vibrated with the joy of living. Nature was in the same mood. The sun sparkled on the river, the poplars quivered in the sunshine. When Nancy went to the paddock to call the cows in to be milked, even they seemed infected with the brightness everywhere, and frisked with joy in their matronly way as they followed her up to the milking-shed.

In the afternoon Jack and Nancy started off to visit the lighthouse, for Jack had not yet been there. The walk was too far for Captain Drake, and Jack Hethersett was not altogether sorry that it was so, as he was glad to have Nancy to himself. They rowed across the river and tied the boat up securely. They then started on their walk. For some way they skirted the seashore, then turned off into the bush, where, for a while, they rested. In a sweet spot, with the scent

of the gum-trees and the bracken, and in front of them the sea stretching out into the far distance, Jack told Nancy how he loved her, and longed to take her over the sea to be his alone in the long years to come, and with "one long kiss he drew her whole soul through," and she was his for all eternity.

Nancy quite forgot her grandfather's favourite proverb that "Time and tide wait for no man," and was so blissfully happy in Jack's arms, and Jack's love, that, but for the sun descending rapidly on the horizon of the sea, and reminding her how late it was, she could have remained thus for ever.

It was too late for them to go on to the lighthouse, so they hurried back to the boat, and just arrived at Drake's cottage as the sun was departing behind the poplars. As they came up the garden Captain Drake walked down to meet them, his dear old face looking "like a benediction," as Cervantes says of the student Christostomo in "Don Quixote." Nancy sprang into the open arms of her grandfather, who guessed her joy.

Such a merry, happy evening those

three spent together, that it almost seemed to them that they were the only people on God's earth. Captain Drake asked Jack if he did not consider the view from the lighthouse a very fine one, and also what he thought of the lighthouse-keeper, who was a Devonshire man, with a complexion that many an Australian girl envied. To these questions Jack had to confess that they never reached the lighthouse, but hoped to go there another day.

The Captain enjoyed Jack's confession immensely, and laughed so heartily that the others joined in the laughter with him. When the old man recovered his breath a little, "Ah!" he said, "I thought as much, I thought as much! I was young once, you know, and even now the memory of those first days is sweet to me. Jack Hethersett, take the advice of an old man, and after you're married remember to be a lover to your wife all your life long. Don't let any of these new-fangled ideas enter into your thoughts! Just love and cherish the wife of your youth as the most precious gift God has given you. But, my children, I ramble on, for it's early days yet to talk

of these things. Only your happiness carried me back to my youth, Jack. I can see Nancy's grandmother, a sweet slip of a girl; and I can remember the lovely walks we took together in the Essex lanes. Ah me! It seems but yesterday, and it's more than fifty years ago. The dear wife is waiting for me on the other side of the river."

So Captain Drake rambled on, while Nancy sat on the footstool at his feet, fondling the dear hands that had fondled her from the cradle. As Jack looked upon them he thought what a subject they would be for Millais's brush, reminding him indeed of that great master's famous picture, "The North-west Passage." Jack was only a landscape painter himself, and regretted it at that moment.

The next morning Captain Drake and Jack arranged that the wedding should take place in four months. That would give them time to receive the consent of Sir Philip Hethersett, for without that, the Captain would not allow the marriage. Jack, however, felt quite happy on that score. Captain Drake told him that when he died Nancy would come in for his

Arcadian Days

little savings, in all about six thousand pounds, so that he would not have quite a penniless wife. Needless to say all this was most uninteresting to Jack, who wanted Nancy just for herself alone, and who was far too greatly elevated in the throes of "Love's young dream" to come down to such mundane affairs as money matters, knowing that he had not any need to trouble himself over such things, and not understanding those prosaic lines of Byron:—

> The greatest of all earthly ills,
> Those everlasting weekly bills.

Poor Byron! to think so great a genius should have to be troubled with such petty carping care!

As Jack's letter is homeward bound, so, in the next chapter, our thoughts will go with it, and we shall have a glimpse of Jack's home and people in the East Anglia of the dear Homeland.

Our new-born lovers we will leave to themselves awhile, for if we see too much of them, you and I, dear reader, may feel inclined to say with Randolph Caldicott's "Jolly Huntsman" of yore:—

One said that they were lovers, another he said, "Nay,"
They're just two wandering lunatics who've gone and lost their way.

If they do lose their way, the dear old Captain will help them to find it again. With such a skilled navigator at the helm it will be easy for these his dear ones to steer clear of rocks and dangers ahead. So, in that sweet little island in the sunny Pacific, we will leave them for awhile.

The Dear Home-land

## CHAPTER V.

## THE DEAR HOMELAND.

**The stately homes of England,**
**How beautiful they stand.**

**Felicia Hemans.**

Which of us, banished from our native land, does not feel with Browning, "Oh, to be in England, now that April's there!" So we will arrive with Jack's letter in the springtime, the last days of April, the fullest, richest time in the Spring, having left Autumn behind with Jack and Nancy in that beautiful little island in the South Pacific. The Autumn there has not the sense of death and decay of the English Autumn. Even the emptied branches of the fruit trees look, not brown and dead, as they do in the Old Country, but quite life-like and warm with a yellow ochre tinge against the brilliant sky. When the Spring comes in that sunny isle, it does not typify the resurrection of all things, as does the

The Dear Homeland

Spring in the dear Homeland—for the dearth of flowers in winter is not known in the Southern climes.

The glory of the Spring-time in dear old England! Ah, me! who can describe it?

The fragile fronds of the bracken interspersed with dainty blue-bells, and the delicate white wood-anemones making a carpet so gloriously woven that it seems sacrilege to tread upon it; over all the May trees full of their white blossom, looking like snow in the distance, but their sweet scent telling us that they are not cruel and cold as snow; again, the crab-apple blossoms showing their delicate pink and white against the blue Spring sky. How lovely to lie down in a blue-bell wood, with a canopy over one's head of the young, tender, green leaves of the oak tree! How perfect it all is! Then again to wander through the fields, carpeted so richly with the golden cowslips, to the river's bank, fringed on either side with the marsh-mallows, or king-cups, as the country people call them.

The Dear Home-land

Hethersett Hall, like many another ancestral home, situated in its own park, was a fine mansion of the Queen Anne time; the ancient Hall having been pulled down to make room for the modern improvements of Queen Anne's period. Age had now softened its red front and a stately English home it looked to the stranger seeing it for the first time across the park, but in it was to be seen the Chapel of the Hethersetts, dating from the time of Richard Coeur de Lion, and therefore Norman in its severe and handsome outlines. On the walls of the chapel hung the armour of the brave old knights of the Hethersett family, some so old and rusty, well-nigh dropping to pieces.

The fittings of the chapel were all in good order, no sense of decay surrounding them, for the Hethersetts had always valued their church, and although Cromwell's soldiers had done their best to destroy the beauty of the interior, it was not long after the restoration of Charles II. that the Hethersett of the day set to work to restore his chapel to its pristine glory. Across from the chapel

The Dear Home-land

we will walk to the Hall. On the south terrace we shall find two girls seated, one busy knitting, the other playing with a collie, who, all at once jumps up with a joyous bark of welcome, and runs to meet a middle-aged man, who is coming towards the two girls. Sir Philip Hethersett, for he it is, that fine looking man, every inch an Englishman, whose years have only added dignity to his handsomeness. What a true ring there is about his voice when he speaks to Cynthia, the younger girl!

"How now, Cynthia, lazy as ever. Why does not Helen teach you to copy her, and do something useful for others?"

Cynthia hid her face in Scott's soft coat a moment, then jumped up and put her arms round her father's neck.

"Dad, dear," she said, "what's that letter about that you have in your hand! I know, by the twinkle in your eye, you have some news to tell."

"Well, well, my little witch, since you say so, I suppose I have. Now guess, girls, from whom is this letter?"

"Oh, I know," said Cynthia; "of course

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it's from Jack. Oh, tell us, Daddy, when does he come home?"

"In the autumn, dear. But that is not all my news. Now, Helen, you give a guess, and tell me what you think the news is?"

"Perhaps, Father, he is bringing home a kangaroo for Cynthia to ride on."

At that Cynthia burst in with:—"You old silly Helen! I know; I know! Jack's fallen in love with an aboriginal, and is going to bring us home a black sister."

"Very nearly right, Cynthia, but not quite. For Jack has fallen in love with, he says, the sweetest, the most lovely girl he has ever seen, or that I have (so he says); but I decline to believe that! However, she seems to be as near perfection as possible, so we must take her at Jack's valuation, and welcome her to our hearts and home. Sweet Nancy Drake, descendant, as Jack tells me, of that valiant sailor, Sir Francis Drake, of the time of Queen Elizabeth. The Hethersetts and the Drakes fought side by side in the days of good Queen Bess. Come, girls, come with me to tea, and we will tell Lady Hethersett the news."

Round the terrace they walked to the eastern side, where the principal entrance was, the outer doors standing open, as is usual in English country homes. Through the inner doors they passed into the big square hall, carpeted with a rich Turkey carpet, and giving one such an idea of comfort, with its luxuriant Chesterfield lounges, chairs of all shapes and sizes, from the substantial grandfather's chairs, with their embossed velvet coverings, to the chair that Cynthia looked upon as her own.

The wood fire burned cheerily on the long low hearth, shining on and lighting up the shields and armour that decorated the hall; the pictures, in the firelight, looking as if far away in the distance.

That hall was an ideal one, all the principal rooms opening into it, the wide staircase at one side of the hall, and a large gallery running round above it.

When Sir Philip and his daughters entered the hall they were astonished not to find Lady Hethersett there. However, in a few moments they heard the sound of a carriage on the drive.

Lady Hethersett came in, having just returned from her weekly round of visits to the poor of the parish. She made a rule of visiting all the poor once a week, and any special cases of sickness or poverty were attended to by her or the girls during the forenoon of each day.

Evelyn Hethersett, or Madonna, as they called her, Sir Philip's second wife, was in her twenty-eighth year, as typical an Englishwoman as one could meet—tall, fair, with beautiful features, a face beaming with brightness and intelligence. No wonder the three, already seated in the hall, rose to welcome her with smiling faces. Very smiling, she thought, as Sir Philip, with his old-world courtesy, placed her chair near to the tea-table. Evelyn felt there was something unusual in the air.

"Tell me," she said, "what is the little joke? Cynthia looks as if she is bubbling over, Helen looks very wise about something, and your eyes, dear Husband, are trying to tell me many things."

"Well, Madonna, what will you say if I tell you father has a letter from Jack,

telling him that he is bringing home an aboriginal as Mrs. John Hethersett?''

''I should say a certain maiden is making up silly little tales. But do tell me, Philip, dear! Have you had a letter from Jack? And when is he coming home?''

''Yes, dearest. I received a letter from Jack, just after you left. He hopes to come back in the autumn, bringing his girl-wife with him. He has written asking my consent to his marriage, as the girl's grandfather, very properly, will not agree to her marriage without my written consent. Certainly, from Jack's description, Nancy seems to be a charming demoiselle, although not in our set, evidently by birth and bearing a lady, and doubtless far more lovable than the slangy, up-to-date girl of the present day, with her mannish bold ways. So, my Council of Three, what is to be the answer to Jack's letter?''

All agreed there could only be one answer, and that in the affirmative.

After Sir Philip had finished his tea, he left the ladies to take his usual ramble round the kennels and stables, to arrange his plans for the morrow.

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Sir Philip's Clumbers accompanied him on his rounds, fine pure Clumber spaniels. They were noted, not only in Norfolk, but in the surrounding counties. Generations of them had lived and died at Hethersett Hall. There was a family of young Clumbers, with their mother Joan, living at the keeper's lodge in the Home Park.

Bob and Darby kept close to their master's heels, but Hector, who was of a younger generation, rushed about the green sward ever and anon returning to his companions, and asking with enquiring eyes why they did not join him in his frolics, not realising that Bob and Darby considered themselves Sir Philip's guardians, and that if they left him he would come to harm.

Sir Philip followed the drive round until he came to the stable gates—such huge gates, with the lion on guard on either side, as he had been for many a long, long year. Moss and house-leeks grew on the walls. The large entrance gates into the stable yard were closed for the night, so Sir Philip and his escort entered through one of the smaller gates.

Sir Philip wended his way to the

stables, where one of his own favourites was, a bright bay with black points, standing nearly sixteen hands. Some judges might have thought his head a bit too big, but Sir Philip preferred a horse of a build heavy enough to carry his sixteen stone, with not too small a head, for he considered a horse with good width between the eyes to have much more intelligence and kindliness of disposition than one having a head narrow and small in proportion to its body.

Only very rich men can give the prices these horses fetch, for a horse that can carry a heavy weight, and yet have speed, is indeed a valuable one. Sir Philip always gave a long price for his horses, and there was no better judge in that very horse-loving county of Norfolk.

The man, who had just finished bedding Monarch down for the night (and a good deep bedding Sir Philip insisted on all his horses having), turned to his master, and touching his cap said:—

"He do look well, don't 'e, sir? A terrible glutton 'e is for 'is food, but there's not one to come anigh 'im in this county.

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Whoa! Steady, there, steady, Monarch! Yer supper's just a-comin'."

"He does you credit, Cannon," said Sir Philip as he walked into the loose-box and patted Monarch. But Monarch was too restless and expectant to be patient, even under the loving touch of his master. He could hear Cannon measuring out his oats and chaff, and turning round and round, whinnying to Cannon, treated his master with scant courtesy. Cannon, who was some few years older than his master, had grown up with him. They had gone out riding together in their young days, although he was now bent with his "rheumatiz," as he called it, and could not act as groom to Sir Philip any longer. He never allowed any of the stable boys to touch Sir Philip's own horses. In the hunting season he was obliged to let others do his master's hunters, but he superintended them, and he never thought his master's horse safely saddled unless he examined the girths and stirrup-leathers himself.

"Will yer be wantin' Monarch to-morrer, sir?" he said; "or will yer 'ave The Dandy? He's in fine fettle, 'e is, but 'e

needs a deuced lot o' work. Oh, 'e fancies 'imself, 'e does, The Dandy!"

"Yes, Ben, have The Dandy ready for me at eleven o'clock, for I shall give him a good run, and that will keep him in order a bit. Well, good-night to you, Ben, and don't forget to rub your legs with Elliman's Embrocation, or get your good wife to do it for you."

"Lor, bless my soul, sir! 'ow yer do think for others. As my old gal said to me t'other night, 'Ben Cannon,' says she, 'Yer ought to thank the Almighty on bended knees (she forgot I couldn't bend mine much, sir!) for that there blessed Master of yers, and not the Master only, but the Missis, and the sweet young Misses, too.' Then all at once she breaks off, and says, in such a gentle voice, 'Ben, when's my bonny Master Jack comin' back? I do weary to see 'is dear 'andsome face,' and with that, lor, bless yer, sir, she burst out a-cryin'. She was thinkin' of the days when she nussed 'im as a babby. Women are such queer cattle, ain't they, sir, a-beggin' of yer pardon, sir. I'm a-keepin' yer."

So Ben Cannon, again touching his cap

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to the master he reverenced and loved so much, hobbled off to see to his various duties, while Sir Philip continued his round to the different stalls and stables, stopping here and there to exchange a kindly word with some of the stable-hands.

Sir Philip, and Sir Philip's father before him, always made it a rule for the head-coachman to come at ten o'clock and report to him all safe in the stables, and to take his orders for the next morning. Mr. Hills, as he was called by the other servants, was a great swell in his way, very true and faithful to the good master he served, knowing perhaps more of the history of the Hethersetts, and the families with whom they had intermarried, than Sir Philip did himself, for had not his father, George Hills, handed down the tales to him that had been handed down by his father and grandfather before him.

After Sir Philip left the stables it was quite twilight, and to make his walk a little longer, he left the stable yard at the entrance into the Home Park, and made a detour round to the Chapel, again across the Park to the drive, and so back to the house.

## CHAPTER VI.

## A WAYSIDE TRAGEDY.

A Wayside Tragedy

O, God! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing,
In any shape, in any mood.

Byron.

The next forenoon Helen and Cynthia were in their own sitting-room, and thoroughly were they in keeping with their surroundings, the chaste sombre colours of the old room making the youthful beauty of the girls stand out more vividly, as does the dark ground of the cameo throw up and show to perfection the delicate chiselling on its surface.

A sombre quaint room indeed it was, with its mullioned windows and window-seats, and its richly-carved ceiling. Somehow there is about an old room a peace, a restfulness that can never be attained in a modern one.

Helen was busy writing to Jack, Cynthia, as usual, was busy doing nothing, or rather she was watching the rooks fight-

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ing over their nests in the trees down the avenue, when their father came into the room, and calling Cynthia, he said:—

"Come with me for a ride to Travers Court. Sir Adrian wants to have a talk with me about a new hunter he bought at Tattersall's the other day. The horse has been hunted with the Essex for a season or two. Adrian thinks he has a wonder, and wants my opinion—so get ready quickly, dear. And, Helen, tell Madonna that we shall lunch at Travers Court."

Cynthia was not at all unwilling to go for a ride with her father, and soon returned in her riding habit. Very proud Sir Philip was of his younger daughter, for the straight lines of her habit showed off to perfection the splendid proportions of her figure.

"Now, Daddy, I'm ready. I've not kept you waiting long, have I, dear? Good-bye, Helen, give my love to Jack and to Jack's Nancy, and don't go to sleep while I'm out."

Helen walked to the window, and in a few minutes she saw her father and Cynthia walking their horses down the avenue to the Home Park. Sir Philip,

as we know, was riding The Dandy, and Cynthia was on her favourite, Countess. Both horses were longing to be allowed to go, and Helen knew what a glorious canter they would have presently. Turning from the window she found Lady Hethersett just entering the room.

"Oh, Madonna," she exclaimed, "Father asked me to tell you that Cynthia and he have ridden to Travers Court, and will not be in to lunch."

"Cynthia will enjoy that, will she not, Helen? I wonder if her father ever notices how much Sir Adrian and she enjoy each other's society!"

"I sometimes think he must, but it is hard to tell. It is so difficult to understand Cynthia. Some days I think she really does love Adrian, then again I think I'm quite wrong, and that she is perfectly heart-whole. What do you think, Madonna?"

"I fancy, Helen, that Cynthia has not thought about it at all, and I'm sure your father has not the least suspicion. He still looks upon Cynthia as such a child. By the by, Mr. Morton said he would come in to lunch to-day. I am

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sorry he will miss your father, but we must do our best to entertain him."

The Reverend Harold Morton was the Rector of Hethersett-cum-Stowbedon, and acted as chaplain to Sir Philip Hethersett. As he was a widower, living alone in the big rectory, he was often glad to avail himself of the general invitation to go to the Hall whenever he felt lonely.

He and Sir Philip were great friends, having much in common; for, although not contemporaries, both were Trinity Cambridge men. Sir Philip had known Harold Morton from a child, and when the opportunity arose offered him the livings of Hethersett and Stowbedon.

Helen and he were the greatest of friends, and many people thought that more unlikely things might happen than that Helen should become the second Mrs. Morton.

Harold Morton's wife had died a year after union. She had given birth to a little boy, and great was her husband's joy, but it was destined to be short-lived, for before a week had passed away both wife and child were called away to the Silent Land.

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Mr. Morton had now been at Hethersett eight years, and had watched Helen and Cynthia gradually grow from merry romping girls into their early womanhood. He knew well the difference between the two; how Cynthia, in her impulsive, generous way would give all she could to relieve the suffering, but that Helen, as well as giving the material things that cannot be done without, would give her heartfelt sympathy. There is a great difference in feeling sorry for one in trouble and feeling with them.

Helen had just finished her letters for the morning, and Lady Hethersett was still busy over her work, garments for some of her poorer friends, when Mr. Morton was announced.

The Reverend Harold Morton was a fine man in his thirty-eighth year, having a handsome, open countenance, with dark brown hair, just tinged with silver, soft, true, brown eyes, a very sensitive mouth, and the jaw and chin of a man of much strength of character. When he spoke he answered to Emerson's description, "When a man has been with God his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur

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of the brook, and the rustle of the corn.'' Do not imagine that he was built on soft lines, far from it. He was six feet three in height, broad and athletic in build. His expressive face could be stern enough when he felt strongly, but his face was ''like a Benediction'' when pondering over the sufferings of poor humanity. Such was the Rector of Hethersett-cum-Stowbedon, and glad indeed were the Hethersetts always to welcome him to Hethersett Hall.

After luncheon was over Helen rode off in the direction of Travers Court to meet her father and Cynthia on their way home. Mr. Morton asked Lady Hethersett to come with him to Granny Trueman's cottage to see a girl who was, he feared, dying, and to whom he had been called that morning, when he found her with a new-born infant, whom the poor mother was most anxious to have baptised. Great was the shock he received when he found, instead of the usual tramp, here was a lady of evident birth and education. Sad indeed was the tale she unfolded to Mr. Morton.

She told him that her father was a very

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rich man, who had given her her own way in everything. She had never known the care of a mother, her mother having died when she was born. Her favourite amusement was riding, when she was always attended by the same groom, who was a good-looking man of thirty or thereabouts. However, to make a long story short, this unprincipled man persuaded the child of sixteen to run away from home and marry him, which she unfortunately did.

Richard Grant thought that her father would forgive her, but forgiveness never came, and when Grant found that he was burdened with a child-wife, without any means to support her, also that she was always fretting and pining for her old home, he took to drinking heavily. One day he went away, telling her he was going to obtain some work, but he never returned to his poor helpless little wife.

The dying girl told the rector that all the early autumn she had been picking hops, and then had managed to tramp as far as Hethersett when her trouble had overtaken her, and she was found by Granny Trueman, who, like the good Samaritan, had taken compassion on her,

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and brought her to her little cottage, where she felt she had come to die.

When the rector finished this sad tale, Lady Hethersett exclaimed:

"Poor misguided girl! How bitterly has she paid the penalty of her waywardness. I will go with you and see if I can comfort her at all."

"She may have passed away from all her trouble and distress, Lady Hethersett, but if not, I am sure that your sympathy will comfort the poor child. So, if you will allow me, I will go with you to the cottage."

When they arrived at the cottage they found the poor thing still lingering, but the doctor, who was just leaving, drew Lady Hethersett outside the door, and told her that life was fast leaving the poor girl, that she could not live many hours. Also the baby would certainly not live, he being such a fragile little bit of humanity. He seemed firmly resolved not to try to live, as he would not take any nourishment.

Evelyn at once went to the bedside of the dying girl, and, in her sweet gentle manner, said:—

"I feel so for you, dear child. The rector has told me your terribly sad tale. Is there anything I can do to help you?"

The girl nodded her head, and tried to talk, but she was so weak that the attempt proved useless. Lady Hethersett took the poor damp hand in hers, and said:—

"Never mind, dear. Perhaps presently you may have strength given you to tell me." And she gave her a little weak brandy and water, having brought some brandy and other comforts with her.

After an interval of a few moments, the sick girl whispered:—

"My father," and then, after a little while, "forgiveness," and Evelyn guessed it was her father's forgiveness she so longed for. So to try to comfort her she said:—

"I am certain, dear one, that could your father know of your sufferings he would indeed forgive you. So do not worry, dear, about that, but think of those most blessed words, 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

The poor sufferer gave Evelyn such a

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grateful look, and, saying softly the words, "Rest! Rest!" her poor broken spirit passed away to be received and forgiven by the most loving of all Fathers, and the most righteous of all Judges.

Evelyn turned from the death-bed to Granny Trueman, who was sitting in a low chair by the small fire, with the little bundle of humanity in her arms. She took the tiny thing into her own arms, and looked long and anxiously at the little life. As Mr. Morton rose from his knees by the bedside of the dead mother, and saw Evelyn with the babe in her arms, he thought how well indeed the name Helen had given her of Madonna, suited that beautiful sweet woman. Lady Hethersett called him to her, and asked him if he could hear or see the little one breathing, but neither could, and Granny Trueman, who was quite a doctor in her own way, said the little one was gone.

"Yes, my lady," she said, "I felt it give a little tremble, and I think then 'as 'ow it died. But it's never cried, and was never more than half-alive."

Lady Hethersett laid the little babe in the arms of the mother, and, as she looked

at them both, she was struck with the singular beauty of the girl. All the suffering had gone from her face, and a peaceful expression was resting thereon. Evelyn kissed her on the forehead, and, turning to Granny Trueman, told her that she was going back to the Hall, and would send her a nightdress to lay the dead mother out in. For Evelyn felt that she should have some refinement in her burial, although she had been a stranger to it for so many months now.

This all happened on Thursday, and on Sunday afternoon the funeral was to be. On Saturday Lady Hethersett, accompanied by Helen, visited Granny Trueman's cottage, bringing lilies of the valley, and violets with them. They laid them on the mother and babe in their coffin. So beautiful was the sight that both Evelyn and Helen felt it almost wicked to cover up so chaste and perfect a piece of sculpture.

As they walked homewards through the Park, Helen said:—

"Madonna, dear, I have been thinking so much of the refrain of that song you

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sing, "The ways of men are narrow, but the Gates of Heaven are wide."

"Yes, darling Helen, how grand it all is to feel and to know that God is as broad as is his wonderful world. I wonder if you ever feel as I do, that you have lived before! You know those lines of Wordsworth:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come,
From God, who is our home.

"They are beautiful lines, Madonna. But re-incarnation seems too deep for me to understand. I wonder what Mr. Morton would say on that subject."

"I wonder also, but some day we will ask him to give us his views. What an advantage it is for us in this country place to have such a parish priest as Harold Morton, so broad-minded, and taking so large a view of life; also so strong a churchman, loving so deeply all her old traditions and customs."

When they arrived at home tea, as usual, was waiting for them in the hall, and Cynthia was lost both in a book and a sofa.

## CHAPTER VII.

Humanity

## HUMANITY.

**Death in itself is nothing; but we fear**
**To be we know not what, we know not where.**

**Dryden.**

Sunday came and with it the funeral. Sir Philip had told his bailiff to ask six of his men to carry the coffin to the grave. It was the custom for the men to put on clean white smocks when performing this duty. The Hethersetts lent their violet pall, Sir Philip and the doctor acted as pall-bearers, and the choir preceded the coffin to the church. Granny Trueman's cottage was bordering on Hethersett Park, indeed almost in it, so it was only a short distance to walk to the little churchyard, where Lady Hethersett had chosen the grave for the poor unfortunate mother and child. The grave was lined, by Evelyn's wish, with moss, primroses and violets. As the coffin was being carried through the lane leading to the Park a light wind

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arose and scattered some of the petals of the May-blossom on to the violet pall. To Sir Philip they seemed to say, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be whiter than snow," for like a shower of snow the falling May-blossom seemed.

Lady Hethersett, Helen and Cynthia were in the church when the coffin arrived, and each felt the beauty of the service as the rector, in his rich full voice, met the procession at the Lych Gate with those grand opening words of the Church's service for the burial of her dead. "I am the resurrection and the life."

As the sun shone that spring afternoon through the old stained glass windows, and reflected the colours on to the white surplices and smocks of the coffin-bearers, the effect was indeed beautiful, and spoke not of death, but of the glory of Heaven.

As they all gathered round the stranger's grave in that little peaceful churchyard, Evelyn felt thankful that they had found the poor lonely one, and had given her a resting-place. Sewn in

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the bodice of her worn gown, Granny Trueman had found her marriage certificate, so, in due course, the Hethersetts had a simple granite cross erected, with just the name, "Kathleen Grant, aged 17, and her infant, Richard, born and died, May 1st," and underneath were these words, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

The spring and summer passed quickly away, Helen's engagement to Mr. Morton being now announced, and very much occupied was Sir Philip, and indeed all of them, in seeing that Stowbedon Hall was got ready for Jack and his bride. Sir Philip decided it would be better for Captain Drake to live with Jack and Nancy, as there was plenty of room in the Hall, and otherwise he might have been lonely.

Stowbedon Hall was much smaller than Hethersett, having always been the Dower House of the Hethersetts, but even so it was a large rambling place. New furniture had to be bought, and great was the interest Lady Hethersett and the girls took in making the rooms for Nancy comfortable and up-to-date. So

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the spring and summer passed rapidly away, and the autumn was drawing near, when the bride and bridegroom were expected home.

Sir Philip, who was a keen sportsman, and liked to have his house full of kindred spirits for September 1st, had quite a large house-party. Sir Adrian Travers was one of the invited guests, so that they not only shot over Sir Philip's preserves, but over those of Sir Adrian also.

Sir Adrian looked upon Sir Philip almost as a father, as he had been parentless for many years, both his parents having died within a few days of each other of typhoid fever. Sir Philip had been his guardian since then, and liked the lad much.

The other guests were the Hon. Mrs. De Courcy, her son and daughter. Reginald De Courcy, a captain in the Life Guards, was a handsome young fellow; Edith, his sister, being quite different from him, petite and snake-like in appearance and manners.

The Hon. Mrs. De Courcy was a buxom dame of good bearing and pleasing manners, ready to take the good things of

life as they came in her way, and, with the exception of having lost her husband in the fulness of his manhood, nothing but good had come to her. If she had a trouble, it was that her daughter and she were not congenial spirits, although they were agreed on one subject, and that was that they both worshipped Reginald De Courcy, and made an idol of him, as only mothers and sisters do. Humanity

Then there were two nephews of Sir Philip's, pleasant young fellows, who had just left Oxford. Both of them were fond of music, and one was very good at singing and acting Chevalier's songs, and accompanying himself on the banjo. Tom Dalton and Harry Everade, cousins to each other, as they were to Helen and Cynthia, were the sons of Sir Philip's sisters, and great favourites of their uncle.

Another guest was the old family lawyer, who was Sir Philip's senior by ten years, but as hale and active a man as one seldom sees, also as keen a sportsman as Sir Philip himself. Mr. Chapman was a man always welcome in a country

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house, as his witty sayings amused and kept the conversation lively.

Ned Chapman, with plenty of money and plenty of friends, found life a very pleasant thing. Many people wondered why he had remained a bachelor, but, like most people, he had had his romance, having, when just bordering on manhood, fallen desperately in love with a sweet cousin, who looked as fragile as a lily, and like a lily succumbed when the strong wind of sickness blew upon her. Ned Chapman had loved her with all his heart and soul, and when she died felt that the one great joy and happiness had passed out of his life, and for the future he must make the best of it he could. For a time he became very morbid, and found Dante his greatest consolation, ever thinking of his love as Dante thought of Beatrice. His healthy vigorous temperament re-asserted itself, however, and few of his friends ever suspected that, hidden away deep down in his heart, the memory of his love was cherished.

How little does one man know of the hidden feelings of another! Often those who seem so full of light-heartedness

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have a great grief hidden away, not to be wounded or probed by the idle curiosity of so-called friends.

A distant cousin of Helen's and Cynthia's was a great addition to the gathering. A Venetian style of beauty she was, with red-gold hair, and the indescribable eyes that often accompany that hair, so that some declared she had dark eyes, others gray, and some said violet. Her temperament was, like her eyes, of many variations and shades. Charming she undoubtedly was, and attracted men to her, as did the Lorelei of old. Her laughter was as welcome as sunshine after rain. The animal magnetism in her was so great that not any one could be near her without feeling conscious that she was there, even although she might not be visible to them. Violet Wodehouse could break in horses that were looked upon as too bad for anything by the ordinary man, but the magnetism in her calmed and sobered down the most wilful and wicked horse.

Very few of the hardest riders could follow her in her flight in the hunting-field, for straight as an arrow after

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hounds she rode, and where her pink coat was seen there they knew the hounds would be. Also a good shot, she would tramp sometimes over the moors and the fields with the men, only it made her suffer so when the birds were killed, that, much as she enjoyed the science of shooting, the killing took so much out of her that she seldom shot at all. Sometimes the exuberance of her spirits carried her away, and she was unable to remain at home when others went out shooting, but the suffering she endured afterwards was out of all proportion to the pleasure. So often, instead of going with the shooting party, she would take her lunch with her and go out riding for the whole day.

To some temperaments going out of the house for an hour or two is so unsatisfying. The joy of being a gipsy for a day is delightful. How difficult it is to describe the perfect bliss of just being out of doors with no object in particular, but just to breathe in the fresh air and see Nature's beauties, and to live every moment of that day.

Lady Hethersett's only brother, Philip

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Ryley, completed the house party, for although his estate was not far from the Hethersetts, Sir Philip liked him to stay part of September with them. Philip Ryley was very handsome, with the clean-cut profile and the bearing of having descended from a long line of intelligent and educated men. Did not his forefathers willingly leave their estates and go to the New World to seek there Freedom of Worship, not permitted then in their native country, and had not his grandfather, a leading barrister of his time in that New World, turned Loyalist, or rather not turned, but remained true to his family traditions by remaining loyal? He had left all his possessions in that New World, and had returned to the country of his ancestors, where he married into a county family. His son, in time, succeeded to his mother's family estate. Had not Philip's ancestor, Sir Philip Ryley, in the reign of Queen Anne, been Sergeant-at-Arms to the Lord High Treasurer, and Ranger of the Forest at Dean? Also the Ryleys of Hockham had for generations been High Sheriffs and Deputy Lieutenants of their county.

The House Party

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE HOUSE PARTY.

I travelled among unknown men,
In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England, did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

The ordinary routine of a house-party is much the same everywhere. Birds were plentiful that season, so all the sportsmen enjoyed a good time. Sometimes the younger men would desert the shooting party and ride with the girls. Somehow Violet Wodehouse and Philip Ryley always managed to get away together, he on his big bay mare Chance, and she on her thoroughbred chestnut Goldfinch. What a beauty Goldfinch was, a bright chestnut, with a blaze and three white socks! How he loved his mistress, and so perfectly did they seem to belong to each other that they looked as if carved out of one piece.

Cynthia rode her favourite Countess, and Sir Adrian Travers Black Bess. Helen

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and Tom Dalton made up the party, the latter riding one of Jack's polo ponies. Harry Everade and Tom had tossed up who was to go riding that day, and Tom had won.

Sir Adrian Travers had planned a luncheon party at Travers Court. Lady Hethersett drove Harry Everade over in her phaeton with her pair of blacks, Firefly and Rocket. Lady Hethersett, like all the Ryleys, was a splendid whip, and Harry was quite contented not to be one of the riding party.

In such manner the days passed away, and the evenings as pleasantly as possible. There was music, when Lady Hethersett played the piano, Violet Wodehouse the violin, putting her whole soul into it, and Philip Ryley the 'cello. Lovely were the trios these three played, varied occasionally by Harry Everade singing his merry songs and accompanying himself on the banjo.

Edith De Courcy, who was not fond of out-of-door exercise, with the exception of walking, was passionately fond of music, and much was the pleasure she gave to the others by singing to them in

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her rich, well-trained, full contralto. Evelyn accompanied her on the piano and often Violet would also accompany her with the violin. The evenings passed so rapidly that often it was morning before they retired to rest, but, as Ned Chapman whispered to Cynthia as they said farewell for the night:—

**The best of all ways to lengthen our days**
**Is to steal a few hours from the night, my dear.**

One gloriously bright September day the rector came to lunch with the ladies. After luncheon, as they were sitting talking in the drawing room, discussing the authors of the day, Lady Hethersett asked Mr. Morton if he had read "The Increasing Purpose," and, as he had not done so, she said she would read to him a passage that had struck her much. Then in her clear voice, she read, "In these simple words she had uttered unaware a long historic truth; that religion, not theology, forms the spiritual life of women. In the whole history of the world's opinions, no dogma of any weight has ever originated with a woman; whereas in many other ways she shows points of superiority in her intellect. It is a man who tries to

apprehend God through his logic and pyschology, a woman understands Him better through emotions and creeds. It is the men who are concerned about the Cupids, the cedar-wood, the Urim and Thummim of the Tabernacle—women walk straight into the Holy of Holies. Men constructed the cross; women wept for the crucified. It was a man—a Jew defending the faith in his own supernatural revelation—who tried to ram a sponge of vinegar into Christ dying; it was women who gathered at the sepulchre of Resurrection. If Christ could have had a few women amongst the apostles, there might have been more of His religion in the world, and fewer creeds barnacled on the world's ship of souls."

"Certainly there is great truth in those remarks," said Mr. Morton. "I should like to read the book, if you will kindly lend it to me, Lady Hethersett. At the same time, I feel sure that Christ had no desire to put women in so prominent a position as His Apostles took, knowing that they could do better work in their own way, through their emotions, whereas as leaders their very emotions would

lead them to commit errors and carry them astray. In the main, I agree thoroughly with the thoughts you have read to us, and, if it were not for the emotions of women, and their keen appreciation of all that is most beautiful in religion, I am sure that much of the love of Christ would be lost to the world."

"Well, Mr. Morton, I shall be very glad to lend you 'The Increasing Purpose,' and another book I like very much by the same author, called 'The Choir Invisible.'"

"Thanks, very much, Lady Hethersett. And talking of 'The Choir Invisible' reminds me to tell you that a charming family has taken the Grange—the haunted Grange, as they call it here. But I do not think it will be haunted any longer, for, as I once read somewhere, and I think the author of the lines is Francis Fahy—

Soon as you lift the latch, little ones are meeting you,
Soon as you are 'neath the thatch kindly looks are greeting you.
Scarcely have you time to be holding out the fist to them,
Down by the fireside you're sitting in the midst of them.

And such bonny children, too; the father an artist, the mother a sweet looking woman. The eldest boy, who is coming into the choir, has such a fine intellectual face. His mother says that he was always preaching sermons at one time, dressed up in a nightdress for a surplice. She wrote them down at the time, and is lending them to me to read."

Mrs. De Courcy, who had only been a listener, at this joined in the conversation. "Is the Grange that long, low, thatched house at the corner of Grey Goose Common? The whole front of the house covered in roses and honeysuckle."

"Yes, yes, Mrs. De Courcy, that is the house," said Evelyn. "And an ideal home for any artist. Have you seen any of his pictures, Mr. Morton?"

"Yes, a few; but he has invited me to spend an afternoon in his studio. They seem just the happiest family you can imagine, the father, however, not taking much interest in church matters. Indeed he told me that all creeds and formulas were too cold for him. He preferred mother Nature. As you know, Lady Hethersett, from Nature to Nature's God

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is not a very long way, and time performs many wonders. Mrs. Somerville, being a clergyman's daughter, is very anxious her children should be church-lovers, and they are all so fair and beautiful that they made me think of Pope Gregory's words on seeing the Saxon children, 'Non Angli sed Angeli.' I fancy they are not too well off; they do not pretend to anything, but it seems an ideal home. Maurice Somerville, although astray on that one point, seems a man of fine, honest convictions; and, after all, the real test of a man is not what he knows, but what he is in himself, and in his relation to others. So I hope, Lady Hethersett, you will call on Mrs. Somerville, and I am sure that you will be as charmed with the whole family as I am."

Helen, who had been sitting at a small table, putting some finishing touches to a water-colour sketch she had made that morning, rose, as the rector also did, and he asked her to walk with him through the park.

As soon as Mr. Morton and Helen were outside the door, Mrs. De Courcy said to Lady Hethersett:—

"When is the marriage to be? What a fine pair they will make, and how nice for you and Sir Philip to have Helen always close to you."

"Indeed, Mrs. De Courcy, we are glad to feel that Helen will not go away from us, and soon after Jack's return they will be married. Mr. Morton is so lonely in the large rectory, and Helen is devoted to him. You know Helen would never care for a very young man. She is thoughtful for her years, and takes the responsibility of life so seriously."

"Yes. Evelyn, she will make a splendid clergyman's wife. I can never understand how you and she go into the labourers' cottages and visit them when they are sick. I cannot do it in my own village. I send them all kinds of things, but I cannot go into the stuffy little cottages. They never open their windows; but, of course, they none of them pretend to love me as one can see you are loved by all the people here."

"Oh, Mrs. De Courcy, I just love them, too, and they do one so much good. I learn so much from their patient sufferings, and really think I enjoy my village

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visitings more than I do my social. I knew the strangest old couple at Hockham. The old man was bed-ridden; he always kept a stick in his bed, and when his poor old wife displeased him, he used to call her to him, and knock the poor old woman about. She was only half-witted. When I used to go into the cottage she would be sitting by the fireside, and when I asked her how she was, 'Oh, my dear,' she would say, 'Abraham has been worrying me so, and don't you see Moses going up the chimney?' Poor old soul, she would get into a terrible state sometimes, because the Prophets were worrying her so that she could not rest at night. Her cottage was opposite the churchyard, and one night, when the ice was thick on the ground, she was wandering about the churchyard, chasing the Prophets away, when she slipped down and broke her leg, and lay out in the cold all night. When found she was too far gone to restore to life. The old man was such a nice-looking old man. I always got on well with him. Once I asked him if he would like me to read to him. 'Well, miss,' he said, 'it all depends upon how you read.' So

I said I would read a little to him, and he should tell me how he liked it. 'Lor, miss,' he said, 'I quite like your reading, and wish how you would come and read to me every day.' However, he did not long survive his wife, and the woman who looked after him was thankful when he died, for he was a terrible old man."

Mrs. De Courcy was just going to make a remark, when Cynthia and Edith De Courcy rushed into the room in their riding-habits, looking so fresh, and bringing such a sweet scent of the outside world into the room with them, that Lady Hethersett exclaimed:—

"You girls do look as if you had been enjoying yourselves."

"And so we have, Madonna mine. I wish you had been with us. First of all we rode in the direction of Stowbedon, and thought we might see something of the sportsmen, but never a sight of them did we get. We went over the Hall, and they are getting on splendidly with it. Oh! I just love Nancy's sitting-room, with its big round window, with such a lovely view of the park and lake in the distance! Do you know, Mrs. De Courcy, Stowbedon

Lake is seven miles in length, and I forget how many miles broad. You can just imagine what glorious skating we have when the ice is thick."

"What makes the skating so glorious, Cynthia?" said Mrs. De Courcy. "Does Sir Adrian skate too?"

A tell-tale blush overspread Cynthia's face, and to her great joy the coming of afternoon tea changed the subject.

Helen also came in at the same moment, looking so beautiful with her heightened colour, and the love-light in her eyes, that Cynthia just pounced upon her, giving her such a kiss and hug that Helen gasped for breath.

"Oh, you dear old Helen! How sweet you look!" said Cynthia. "What have you been doing with yourself since I robbed you of my charming company?"

"Ah, Cynthia," said Mrs. De Courcy, "Helen has found 'two company and three none' true this afternoon."

"Oh, I know where you've been, Helen! And so you never missed Cynthia one little bit, did you, sister mine?"

"I always miss you, dear. This afternoon I came through the stable-yard and

met Cannon, and he told me the hunters would come up next week, and cub-hunting will soon commence now. He says his wife thinks you are never going to see her again, and she is always talking about Jack and the wife he is bringing home. Hasn't Violet come in yet? I met her schooling Madcap over some fences. What she enjoys is to go out alone with an unmanageable horse, and break and bend him to her will. Ring the bell, Cynthia, and let us find out if she has come in."

Sanders, the butler, came in answer to the bell, and Helen asked him if Miss Wodehouse had returned.

"Yes, miss, about ten minutes ago, and she was so splashed with mud that she asked me to send tea up to her room. Cannon tells me that the horse she was riding came in fairly beat."

That night there was to be a Cinderella dance at Hethersett Hall, and, as all the girls, with the exception of Helen, loved dancing, they were in great spirits. As the house party gathered in the drawing-room before dinner, the men fresh, cheery, and contented after their good day's sport, the girls brimming over with

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sparkle and fun, anticipating a glorious evening, Philip Ryley missed Violet Wodehouse, but, at that moment, she entered the room, looking radiantly beautiful, the brilliant lights throwing up the golden tints in her glorious hair, the amethyst colour of her dress intensifying the effect in a great way, so that she looked a vision in amethyst and gold. The soft clinging folds of her gown showed off her beautiful height and proportions to perfection.

Philip Ryley stepped forward to lead her to a seat, and, as Evelyn looked at them, she thought what an ornament Violet would be to the old home of her ancestors, and wondered when they would announce their engagement. Mr. Morton dined with the party at Hethersett Hall. The evening passed off with all the brightness that such evenings do when the host and hostess are as courteous and kind as were Sir Philip and Lady Hethersett.

Helen sat out most of the dances with Mr. Morton. She loved to watch her father dancing, for he enjoyed it so thoroughly. Ned Chapman liked looking on too, and paying an occasional visit to the

smoking-room. Once Cynthia had made him dance the Lancers with her. However, we must leave Hethersett Hall and its pleasures to themselves, and return to the land of wattle-blossom and of gums, so good-bye to dear old England for a while, until we return with Jack and Nancy.

Love's Fulfilment

## CHAPTER IX.

## LOVE'S FULFILMENT.

She is mine own,
And I am rich in having such a jewel,
As twenty seas, if all their sands were pearl,
The water nectar, and the rocks pure gold.

While Jack's letter was on its way to his old home, he left Nancy and Captain Drake for awhile to visit some parts of the island he had not as yet seen. Then he purposed going on to Melbourne, to make use of some introductions he had to leading people there, also to see something of the festivities in honour of the King's son and daughter-in-law, who were to open the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, and Melbourne was indeed to be en fete.

He arrived in Melbourne at the end of April. He was much struck with that fine city; the cleanliness, the length and the breadth of its principal streets, and its wonderful tram system. Also, how well lighted it was at night, and how it

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was possible for ladies in evening dress to walk to and from the theatres and railway stations. Altogether he was charmed with Melbourne, and with its beautiful Botanical Gardens, round which a drive had recently been made, between the river and the Gardens, which was, in honour of our beautiful Queen, to be called the Alexandra Drive. He went for a picnic up the Yarra, and wished he could have seen the wattle out in blossom, but this he hoped to do later on, when homeward bound.

The preparations to welcome the Royalties were going on apace. Arches were being erected here and there, and these, although festive looking, took off the width of the Melbourne streets. However, the whole city looked very gay, and the arch at Prince's Bridge, over the Yarra, was most effective, and showed how well a permanent arch would look there.

Jack did not remain in Melbourne, as he did not care for crowds, on the day the Royalties were to arrive, having often seen their Royal Highnesses at home. He preferred accepting an invitation to go and visit the Black Spur. Here again he

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wished he could have seen those wattle trees in bloom, but even without the wattle blossom, he thought it a wondrous drive.

He went with a friend who knew that part of the country well, and who secured box seats on the coach starting from the picturesque township of Healesville. This township of Healesville is situated in a valley, and surrounded by the grand ranges of the Black Spur, or, as some will have them called, the Black's Spur. On they drove, up and up, passing, on their way, huge gums, tremendous in their girth and height. The road wound round and round as it took its upward course, and Jack, looking down some of the gullies they passed, full of tree-ferns and quite tropical undergrowth, wished his people had been with him to see the beauties of this wonderful land.

The scent of the gums made him feel as if he were taking a new lease of life—oh, the beauty of those different gum-trees! How is it that so few people appreciate them! That is to say, English-born people, for, indeed, the Australian-born children of the bush love their native

trees. The pity of it is that there are so many dead gum-trees, giving such a weird and solemn appearance to the landscape. I hope the authoress of the following beautiful poem will forgive me for inserting it here, but its characteristic description of a withered gum-tree, and of the magpies must be my excuse.

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A withered gum tree bare,
Leafless, gnarled and twisted, it reared itself on high,
Mocking the beauteous landscape, flouting the cloudless sky.
Casting distorted shadows, but never a wealth of shade,
Standing a blot on the picture by the coming evening made.

A rush of motion passed me, the dimmest sense of a cloud,
And the old dead tree was covered with a chattering, restless crowd;
White and sulphur-crested, they dotted its sombre grey;
On its topmost point a magpie piped his gurgling lay.

And they dipped in the pebbly creek-bed, they soared again to each limb,
They preened and chattered incessantly their stave of Nature's hymn.
The sunset came and kissed it, then crowned the tree with light,
And a softening flush responded with a rosy radiance bright.

With its base feet deep in incense. its head in Heaven's glow,
The white-winged choir on its branches, and the murmuring creek below,
With the magpie's liquid gurgle resounding clear and strong,
I knew it then for an altar for the Forest's evensong.

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In the above poem our poetess speaks of the liquid gurgling of the magpie. That does not sufficiently convey the heaven-born joyousness of the magpie's note. It is indeed inexpressible!

During Jack's drive up the Black Spur, he heard for the first time the fiendish sound of a laughing jackass, and he certainly was not charmed with it, although it added to the solemnity of the bush.

The scent of the sarsaparilla, that pretty blue creeper that grows everywhere in the bush, blended with the various scents of the different gum-trees, was so unlike anything he had ever imbibed in the Old Country, that he felt, in other years, when thinking of Australia, that that scent would ever come back to him.

As he drove back in the evening, he thought of some lines he had read by H.W.P.:—

The shadows climb the hills, and softly higher,
From fern-embowered glen and gully creep,
Invade the glowing woods that clothe the steep,
Till from the last red leaf they pluck the fire.
Soon the pale western after-lights expire,
A breathing stillness falls, as of a sleep,
Beneath her wondrous dome the earth hangs deep,
A dusky pendant to Night's star attire.

Thou gazest mutely moved, as here of yore
The dark man gazed—whose race has ceased to be,
As sequent generations evermore
Will gaze in equal mood, but know not thee.
And then we pass, akin in joy and sorrow,
A brief to-day 'tween yesterday and morrow.

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Jack thoroughly enjoyed his outing to the Black Spur, and was sorry to return to Melbourne so soon, but, as he had been invited to the reception at Government House, given by His Excellency the Governor to meet their Royal Highnesses, he could not remain longer, so betook himself, with the other invited guests, to that great and interesting reception.

This is what he saw. A King's son from over the seas, the King's messenger of love, gratitude, and unity to his people of the New World; a King's son accompanied by his wife, a descendant of many Kings, now gracing with their royal presence a gathering of people, a motley gathering truly; in colour a sombre one, for was not the memory of the recent passing away of the Great White Queen still with them? How eagerly all awaited the procession of Royalties to the dais of the ballroom. What a regal procession it was, so stately and so dignified, and how

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gracious were the King's son and daughter to those presented to them.

Jack, who knew the Duke and Duchess well, shook hands with them both, and chatted about their Norfolk home. He wished Nancy had been with him. The Duke invited him to join his shooting party on the morrow. Jack was delighted to do so, and told the Duchess how charmed she would be with the drive up the Black Spur. After awhile the Royalties left the dais, and processed amongst the people, his Excellency the Governor-General introducing many leading people to them.

A red letter evening truly! Beauteous women in their gowns of sable hue, relieved by diamonds, intensifying the brilliant uniforms of the men. The centre of all, so gracious, stately, and beautiful, was the daughter of Kings, teaching such a lesson to the daughters of Australia in the simplicity of her dress and manners.

Jack enjoyed his visit to Melbourne very much. Going on from there to Queensland and Sydney, made it the beginning of September before he joined Captain Drake and Nancy. When he re-

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turned to them he had received a letter from his father, giving his consent to the marriage, so now they were able to arrange for the coming wedding.

Nancy was to be married in her own little parish church. After the wedding Jack and she were to go on to Melbourne, then up to the mountains to spend their honeymoon; while Captain Drake was to settle up his affairs, and join them a few days before the steamer started for England.

What a pretty wedding it was! Nancy looked beautiful in her wedding-dress of white chiffon over white satin. She was wearing a plain tulle veil, her only ornament being a pearl necklace, given to her by Jack. How Jack wished his own people could see her!

The dear old Captain gave her away, and the rector's daughter was her only bridesmaid.

When Captain Drake saw them off in the steamer to Melbourne Nancy was rather overcome at parting from her grandfather, but she knew they were to meet soon again. As the Captain said good-bye to Jack, he said, "God bless you,

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my lad. I know my girl is safe with you, but don't brace the sails up too tight. Have them easy, and then you will sail before the wind, right away, sir."

A glorious time Jack and Nancy had up in the mountains. Many were the lovely drives and walks they took. The air was heavy with the insidious scent of the wattle-blossom, and the glory of its golden bloom shone against the hazy blue of the mountains.

Jack had taken his sketching materials with them, and he made several sketches, which Nancy claimed as her own, and said they were to be framed for her sitting-room, so that when they looked at them in the future years they would love to talk of the time spent up in the mountains round Melbourne.

The time flew on, and they returned to Melbourne to meet Captain Drake, who had not been in that city for twenty years. How delighted the old sailor was to see Nancy again, and Jack and Nancy were charmed to show him the wonderful city. The arches still remained that had been erected for the Royal visit. The old Captain was delighted with the tram sys-

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tem, his chief amusement being to get on the dummy of a tram, and to go the whole length of the journey. Nancy had left some of her shopping to do in Melbourne, so that she had to devote some of her time to that. On those days the Captain and Jack would visit the wharves and piers, and inspect the shipping. Also they went over the gaol.

One day, with Nancy, they visited the Zoo, all of them being very much amused with the kangaroos boxing. The spitting llama, watching them, with his supercilious air, seemed to be acting as umpire. As the kangaroos moved, so he followed them. Jack, Nancy, and the Captain thought it the funniest sight they had seen. Nancy had never been to any Zoological Gardens before, and Jack told her that, well and beautifully kept as these Melbourne Gardens were, they could not be compared to the London Zoo, and that, if she were very good, he would take her there some day. So the time passed away, and in late September, they went on board the "Ormuz"—homeward bound. Captain Drake was nearly off his head with delight to be on the sea again. But

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Nancy was not quite so much in love with the sea, as she felt rather too seasick to be quite happy. However, after the good ship left Australian waters, things settled down a bit, and Nancy enjoyed herself exceedingly.

## CHAPTER X.

## JOURNEYING HOMEWARDS.



Breathes there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself has said
This is my own, my native land.

Nancy's excitement was great when they landed at Colombo. The three of them drove out to Mount Lavinia, and had tea there. What a delightful drive it was, the people so strange and weird! The little villages by the roadside, nestling amongst the cocoanut palms! On the return journey from Mount Lavinia the dusk was coming on, but the atmosphere was iridescent with the sparkle of fire-flies innumerable. Then dinner at the Oriental Hotel, and back again to the stately "Ormuz." On to Port Said, with its cosmopolitan population, its flies and creeping things. Nancy felt almost afraid of the people here, and was glad to have Jack and Captain Drake on either side of her.

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A few days of pleasant weather brought them to Naples; and Nancy's first view of the Bay, with Vesuvius puffing away, made her think that too much had not been said or written in praise of the beauty of Naples Bay.

The passengers were allowed some time to go on shore, and Nancy, ever since reading "The Last Days of Pompeii," had longed to see the scene of that wonderful book. So now her dreams were to be realised, as Jack, her grandfather, and herself drove out to Pompeii. What a drive it was, showing them so much of the life of the people round Naples! Many of the women were performing their toilets in the open air. It was curious to see how the houses of the people were mixed up with the Palaces of the Patricians.

When they arrived at Pompeii lunch was ready. They quite enjoyed the maccaroni dressed with tomatoes, and various other dishes of the country. The Captain said he did not quite fancy these made-up things, you know, but when "you are in Rome you must do as Rome does." Nothing, however, would induce him to

drink the wine of the country; he remained true to his usual beverage.

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As most people now-a-days have visited Pompeii for themselves, I must not loiter. But Nancy felt, as most do who have visited this city of the dead, a feeling of awe overpowering one, to think how suddenly the living became the dead, and all were turned to dust and ashes who a few short hours before were brimming over with life and passion. She sat very close to Jack as they returned to Naples, glad to feel the warmth of his body close to her, after being so surrounded by the horrors of death. A very quiet three they were on the return journey; even the old sailor, who had seen many things in his time, feeling a bit gloomy and depressed. Once on board the "Ormuz," with so much busy life surrounding them, they soon recovered their spirits.

The days passed quickly; the stately ship steamed on, past Gibraltar, through the Bay of Biscay, into the English Channel. Here a strong gale was blowing, and as the old Captain paced the deck he thought of those words of Todhunter's:—

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Oh, wind, oh, mighty, melancholy wind,
Blow through me, blow!
Thou blowest forgotten things into my mind
From long ago.

How excited Captain Drake was when he saw the white cliffs of old England, and pointed out Plymouth to Nancy, where his forefathers had lived, and where his old ancestor, Sir Francis Drake, was playing bowls when the Armada was sighted.

If Captain Drake was excited, Jack and Nancy were even more so, thinking of the meeting to come. Jack had begged his people not to come to London to meet them, but to let him bring his bride down to them, so that Nancy would first see them in their home surroundings, so they agreed to remain at the Hall. Captain Drake wished to visit some of his old haunts in Essex, and made Jack promise that Nancy should come to him after having spent some time in her new home; for the dear old man longed to take Nancy over the ground he had been over so often with her grandmother. He had a sister living in Essex, the wife of a wealthy banker, and her home was to be his head-

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quarters, where Nancy and Jack would join him in a month's time.

The ship arrived at Tilbury, and, after the usual bustle and muddle, the passengers found themselves in the train for London. Captain Drake was like a child, showing to his dear ones all the old spots he remembered so well!

Jack and Nancy saw him safely into the Essex train. They then dined at the Great Eastern Hotel, and caught the evening train to Ely, where they remained the night at the Lamb Hotel. What a change for Nancy to be in such an old-world place—the very waiters seemed antique.

Nancy, who had never seen anything old, with the exception of the spots she had visited on her homeward journey, was almost overpowered by the solemn beauty of the Cathedral. She felt that she would like to go to Crowland, and thought of Hereward and poor Torfrida. How often she had read "Hereward" over and over again, weeping at the sorrows of Torfrida, but never thinking that she would be in the land of Kingsley's hero. She knew their time in Ely must

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be short this visit, as they were eagerly expected at Hethersett. She made Jack promise to bring her here again. Then they caught the Norwich train, and said farewell to beauteous Ely for awhile.

On the station at Thetford, awaiting them, was Jack's own man. His delight was unbounded to see his master back again. Keenly he glanced at Jack's bride, almost expecting to see an aboriginal, for the idea of some of the people at Home is that all born in Australia are black, or nearly so. But when he saw the beautiful Mrs. John Hethersett, and she, following her husband's example, shook hands with him, he took the rugs and light bags out to the carriage, and gave Ben Cannon a nod and a knowing look, as much as to say, "She's all right."

Ben Cannon indeed it was who drove in that day to meet his young master and his bride. Very seldom Ben drove now, but he begged Mr. Hills, the head coachman, to let him do so to-day, as he had nursed Jack as a baby, and had not his, Cannon's, wife been Jack's foster-mother. So Mr. Hills allowed him to have his way, and when Ben saw Jack and Nancy, his

face was one broad smile. He touched his hat so many times that Jack could only laugh outright.

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Then Ben rattled his team home in great style, never stopping until they pulled up sharply at the front door of Hethersett Hall. Jack wondered the horses were not down on their hocks, but knew Ben drew them up in his old style of driving the coach.

Sir Philip took Nancy in his arms and welcomed her to her new home. Nancy loved him at once, and Lady Hethersett won her heart by her sweet gracious manners.

Helen and Cynthia were so taken up with Jack that they gave Nancy a moment's breathing time, and then Cynthia hugged and hugged her, and said:—

"Oh, you sweet, beautiful girl! to come from the other side of the world to us. Jack, you did not tell us how really beautiful Nancy is."

As Cynthia spoke to Jack, Helen looked at Nancy, and Nancy looked at her, and each recognised in the other a sister for all time.

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Sir Philip said, "Now, girls, let Madonna take Nancy to her room, for she must be tired out."

Nancy was glad to go with that sweet Madonna; and wondered not that they called her so, but thought how much more perfectly an ideal Madonna she was than the insipid ideals of some of the Old Masters. Here was a Madonna with a love of Humanity, blended with purity and justice written in large letters all over her—just such an one who could have given birth to the Saviour of all Mankind.

Jack joined his father and sisters in the hall, where afternoon tea was waiting them. Soon Nancy joined them, and took a seat beside Sir Philip. Jack felt very proud of his beautiful wife, and could see that his father was quite in love with her already.

Cynthia was full of the beauties of Stowbedon, and told Jack that he would never recognise the old place. Jack said he hoped that they had not modernised it too much.

"You need not be afraid of that, as Madonna saw to everything, and had

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many a hard battle to fight with the upholsterer. However, she got her own way, as she always manages to do, and things really look perfect. Nancy, dear,'' said Cynthia, ''I just long to know your grandfather. I chose most of the pictures for his sitting-room; 'The Death of Nelson,' 'Sir Francis Drake playing bowls when the Armada was sighted'—you know that engraving, don't you?—'The North West Passage,' by Millais. I chose that one because Jack wrote and told us that your grandfather and you always made him think of that picture.''

What a happy evening they all spent together, and when Lady Hethersett played to them Nancy felt entranced. Evelyn's playing was so full of feeling that it carried one away with it. As she played softly some of the ''Lieder ohne Worte,'' and then changed into Grieg's weird love songs and dances, Nancy felt as if she could listen for ever.

It was arranged they were all to go to Stowbedon the next forenoon. Lady Hethersett was to drive Nancy, and the rest arranged to ride.

When the hour came for retiring for the

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night, Helen and Cynthia went to Nancy's room with her to see that she had everything she required. The maid they had engaged for Nancy was a girl from Helen's Sunday-school class, who had been trained under Lady Hethersett's maid for the last three months. Nancy, who had always been accustomed to waiting on herself, wondered how she would like to have always a maid in attendance on her, and was very glad to find a simple, bright-faced handmaiden about her own age, awaiting her. She had read in books of such grand ladies' maids that the thought of one frightened her. The girls remained gossiping for some time, and they all felt as if they had known each other for years. Nancy was so excited after the day's events, and with thinking what her new home would be like, that she found it hard to get to sleep.

The next morning she was awakened by a choir of rooks cawing. As she listened, close to her window, she heard the swe test singing, unlike anything she had ever heard before. Blaekbirds and thrushes she had heard in that island where she was born, but this was different

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altogether. Very quietly she got out of bed, and peeping behind the blind, saw a little brown bird, with a red breast, sitting on a cherry tree, the branches of which covered the window. The little bird was piping away the sweetest notes, as only an English robin can. Robins she had seen before, their breasts a far more brilliant crimson than this little brown-coated gentleman had, but oh! the sweetness of his song! She thought it was more beautiful than any other bird-song she had heard. When she told Jack, he said that there was one more beautiful, he thought, and that was the skylark, and that he would take her in the fields to hear it. He said they must look up Shelley's beautiful poem, "On the Skylark," also Eric Mackay's little gem of a poem on the same bird.

Nancy waited until the robin flew off the cherry-tree, which grew so close to her lattice-window. Then she pushed the window open, and enjoyed the whole beauty of the scene. Blackbirds and thrushes were hopping about the lawn getting their early worms, while all was so quiet around them. The leaves of the

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sycamore trees were just beginning to turn a little yellow; near to them were the deep red leaves of the copper beech, and, far away in the distance, Nancy saw the glorious, fine, old beeches and oaks for which Hethersett Park was noted. She thought how beautiful England was, but it all looked so tidy and well-kept that she was not sure that it did not oppress her a little.

Nancy, having been brought up on that small island in the sunny South, did not feel the want of breadth and space so much as a girl brought up in New South Wales or Victoria would have done.

Breakfast was in the morning-room, the oriel windows of which overlooked the lake, with the swans proudly sailing thereon. As Nancy saw the water of the lake, she thought of the beautiful river on which Jack and she had spent such happy days.

After breakfast she drove with Lady Hethersett to Stowbedon, Sir Philip, his son, and daughters riding. Nancy was delighted when she saw the huge lake, over seven miles in extent. Evelyn told her that she thought she would enjoy

boating on it, and skating on it when it was frozen over.

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Nancy, catching the first glimpse of Stowbedon Hall, with its picturesque front, and its terraces, thought that she was indeed a fortunate girl to have so lovely a home. When they arrived at the Hall, and she saw how beautifully it had all been arranged, she was buoyant with delight, and caught Cynthia round the waist, and waltzed round and round the big square hall with her, until they found themselves held securely in Jack's strong arms.

"Nancy, come with me," he said, "I want to take you to Mrs. Cannon, my old foster-mother. She is waiting for you in the housekeeper's room."

Nancy delighted to do Jack's bidding, and went gaily away with him. There in the housekeeper's room she saw the dearest old woman—cheeks like a rosy apple, with little grey ringlets on either side, and with two of the merriest brown eyes, shining out of the kind old face. Very grand Mrs. Cannon was, in her best black silk gown, with a lace tippet, a cap with cherry-coloured ribbons in it, and mittens on her hands.

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How she bobbed and bobbed, and smiled and smiled, when Jack and Nancy kissed her; for was she not Jack's foster-mother?

"God bless you, miss—oh, dear! I mean ma'am. But you look such a girl, you must forgive me. Ah, Master Jack! I always said you loved beautiful things, even when you were a baby. You used to love my cherry ribbons, and crow and chuckle at 'em, and grab 'old of 'em, when you got the chance. My old man told me last night, 'Master Jack's got a rare beauty, 'e 'as, an' not a bit black either, but fair has a hangel.'"

Nancy laughed so, and gave the dear old woman a great hug and kiss, and then they went on their way over their new home.

If Nancy was delighted with all she had already seen, her delight knew no bounds when she came to her own suite of rooms. The large bedroom, with its deep casement with such a view over the lake, Jack's dressing-room and bath-room opening from one side, hers from the other, and beyond that her own sitting-room. Nancy felt very grateful to

the dear ones who had prepared all so lovingly for her. Pictures painted by Helen, cushions worked by Evelyn, little fancy ornaments given and arranged by Cynthia, and a lovely piano given by Sir Philip.

Jack took the hands of his girl-wife in his own, and thought of those words on Unity that Ruskin wrote in "Modern Painters":—"And so the unity of earthly creatures is their power and their peace; not like the dead and cold peace of undisturbed stones and solitary mountains; but the living peace of trust, and the living power of support; of hands that hold each other and are still."

Jack repeated these words to Nancy, and told her how, years afterwards, Ruskin criticised these words of his most severely in his additional notes by saying that it was "a long, affected, and obscure second-volume sentence, written in imitation of Hooker. One short sentence from Proverbs is the sum of it, 'How can one be warm alone?'"

Nancy felt that was quite true, and told Jack he must read his favourite Ruskin

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to her, and she added, "You know, Jack, you are my walking encyclopaedia."

After luncheon Lady Hethersett drove off on her round of district visiting. Sir Philip and his daughters soon rode away, and, as Jack and Nancy stood on the stone steps waving farewell to them, Sir Philip said:—

"Do you remember, Helen, that Emerson says, 'Every soul is a celestial Venus to some other soul.' Certainly Jack has found a delightful celestial Venus for his soul!"

## CHAPTER XI.

Re-union

## RE-UNION.

'Tis sweet to know
There is an eye will mark our coming,
And look brighter when we come.

After a month had passed away, Nancy received a letter from her grandfather, asking her to come and stay with him at her great-aunt's. As Jack had to go to London on various matters connected with the coming elections, Nancy arranged to stay with her grandfather, and Jack was to join her later on.

Nancy looked forward greatly to her re-union with her grandfather, and, needless to say, the old sailor was longing to see his dear grand-daughter again.

Jack and Nancy travelled to London together, and Jack saw her into the Essex train. Very sad their hearts felt at this their first parting—however, they knew it would not be for long, as Jack would hurry down to join Nancy at Woodredon Manor as soon as possible.

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Nancy was disappointed on arriving at Woodredon Station, not to see her grandfather there, and felt very lonely and strange, until a sweet-faced, matronly woman came to her and said:—

"This must be Nancy—our Nancy—so like her grandfather, and our dear mother."

Nancy guessed this was her grandfather's sister, her great-aunt Mary. But she looked so young for a great-aunt—as indeed she was, Captain Drake having been the eldest of twelve children, and she the youngest, so that now she was only about fifty.

Nancy asked why her grandfather had not come to meet her, and Mrs. Taylor told her that he was confined in his room with a slight cold; but she thought he would be quite well in a day or two.

Although the horses were trotting splendidly, the pace seemed too slow for Nancy, and she longed to be driving them herself, to make them rattle along faster. However, in due course, the carriage drove through the Manor gates, up a long drive to the front entrance of a long, old-fashioned, rambling house. Mrs. Taylor

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and Nancy alighted, and went into a hall where a log fire was burning brightly, as the weather was cold for October.

"Come along, Nancy dear. I know your grandfather will have heard the carriage, and we must not keep him waiting."

Nancy followed Aunt Mary up the broad oak staircase, into a long bedroom, having a delicate blue paper on its walls, the furniture and mantelpiece being white. A lovely wood fire was burning on the hearth, making the copper fittings reflect its brilliant glow.

In the bay window sat Captain Drake. Nancy saw nothing else, but flew over to him, and was soon nestling in his loving arms.

What joy that meeting was to those two who had never been separated before!

"Oh, you naughty, naughty granddad! Just fancy getting a cold when I expected you to meet me!"

"Well, Nancy, child, it was worse for me to have to sit patiently here while good Aunt Mary went to meet my darling."

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Mrs. Taylor left them together for a time, and Nancy's tongue flowed on, so that at last Captain Drake said:—"And is this my quiet Nancy, who has turned into such a chatterbox?"

"Yes, grandfather, dear, it is. But if you only knew how nice they all are at Hethersett, you would wonder that I could cease to talk of them. And they are all longing to see the dearest of grandfathers."

"Nancy," said Captain Drake, "let me look well into your face, dear child, and see if you're spoilt one little bit." After a long, fond gaze into her face, he drew her to him. "No, no, my darling, not spoilt at all, but beautified—beautified by perfect love. God bless you, my darling. May that love continue unsullied until your life's end."

Nancy kissed and kissed again the dear face that she had loved ever since she could remember, and putting her arms round his neck, said:—

"Now, grandfather, it's my turn to look at you, and see if you have altered at all."

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"Oh, my darling, I am like Wordsworth's Celandine—

> It doth not love the shower, or seek the cold,
> This neither is its courage nor its choice,
> But its necessity in being old.

"Grandfather, I think it is so strange that you remember poetry so well. I thought sailors never cared for those things."

"Well, sweetheart, at sea I had a great deal of time for reading, and your grandmother used to like me to read aloud to her while she worked. We both loved poetry. We were young and romantic when we first married, and she was romantic to her dying day. I don't know—what do you think?—I believe I am romantic still!"

Mrs. Taylor returned to the room, and took Nancy off to her own apartments to have a rest before dressing for dinner.

The evening passed pleasantly, and the Captain was able to come down to dinner.

When Nancy retired for the night, she felt a bit lonely, and had a little cry, and longed to have her dear husband-lover back again.

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Nancy did not see Mr. Taylor until the next day, as he had been dining out the evening before, and she had gone to bed before he returned.

When she met him she was charmed with him. He was about the same age as his wife, a fine, well set-up man, over six feet in height, with the brightest, keenest blue eyes, and such a long, fair moustache, every inch an English gentleman, and a sportsman, too, for was he not Master of the B—— Hounds? Nancy fell in love with her uncle at once. Indeed how could she help it with his gentle bonhomie?

He told her he was going cub-hunting the next morning, and asked her if she would get up at five o'clock and go with him. Nancy blushingly told him that she did not hunt, but that Jack was very fond of hunting.

Mr. Taylor looked at Nancy's sweet face and trim figure, and thought Jack was a lucky dog to have so beautiful a wife. "So sweet and natural, don't you know, just like you were when I first met you, Mary mine," he afterwards said to his wife. "Not one of those girls who

fancy they know better than we men do. I hope she's got a decent Jack, that girl, for she ought to have a Prince of Fellows."

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In a few days Captain Drake was quite himself again, and he wandered one Sunday with Nancy into the forest he loved so well. He showed her where her grandmother and he used to sit and listen to the choir of singing birds.

October seems to be the commencement of the dying of the year. The dying did I say? How could one call it dying wh n all is so glorious, so rich, so vividly alive with colour—the glorious colours, the soft pale golds and yellows of the bracken, gradually deepening and shading off into browns and crimsons and deep blood reds, asserting themselves so strongly, until they die softly, peacefully. But now strongly asserting themselves in contrast to the heather with its deep tones of reddish brown, making such a splendid foreground to all the colours of the bracken, throwing it up and intensifying it so deeply—the heather so warm even in its dying, like a mother lulling her children to sleep, so that they may

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be ready for play in the morning—that fair spring morning when the curly fronds of the bracken will push their tender tips up to welcome the resurrection of all things. Pliny gave it as his opinion that the moment of dying was the most exquisite instant of life. He writes:—"Ipse discessus animae plerumque fit sine dolore nonnunquam etiam cum ipsâ voluptate." Truly the departure of Nature is exquisite—waiting, so quietly, so silently, so gloriously saying farewell to the sun and the sky; waiting for the wind to perform its last funeral rites, and leaving dear old Mother Earth to do the rest.

As Nancy and Captain Drake went on and on, they felt that they could not have enough of that lovely bracken and dying heather. Occasionally a jay's harsh note startled the quiet of the forest. So quiet, so supernaturally still was the forest on that day that the loud whirr of a frightened pheasant's wings over their heads gave them quite a start. Still on and on they went, into higher ground, up among the beeches. The sun was deepening, fast getting almost red in its colouring, and casting its warm light on the trunks of the beeches.

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Here and there the quaint gnarled hornbeams came in sight—all their slender branches covered closely with their leaves —still quite green, while the beech leaves had been kissed into warmth by the sun—to prepare them for the cold wind that would soon sweep them away.

Nancy and her grandfather wandered on until they found themselves on a forest track with banks of heather and moss, fringed with overhanging bracken on either side, and dead leaves everywhere. There always are dead leaves in the forest —"they rustle to the eddying gust and to the rabbit's tread."

Over all the low bushes were light gossamer webs resting, innumerable and powdered over by old Autumn, "who in the misty morn had stood shaking his languid locks all dewy bright with tangled gossamer that fell by night."

Nancy and the Captain sat down on a fallen trunk to rest, to look upon this lovely scene, and as they sat enjoying the perfect stillness and the perfect rest, the shadows of departing day crept on once more. As Nancy looked across the flat below them, she caught sight of a herd

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of fallow deer, and drew her grandfather's attention to them. But off and away they were before he saw them. However, on their return walk to Woodredon Manor, they saw a herd quietly browsing. Soon, however, the leader scented them, and they tossed up their heads and bounded off into the thick of the forest.

Captain Drake told Nancy how her grandmother and he used to go out for the day together, and rest amongst the bracken, enjoying the beauties of the forest. In some parts the bracken was nine or ten feet high. The change to them after being on the sea so long was delightful.

Nancy was never weary of hearing her grandfather's yarns, telling her of the days of his youth. Many were the lovely walks they had together, so the time passed away until Jack was to arrive at Woodredon Manor.

## CHAPTER XII.

## FOX-HUNTING DAYS.

Fox-Hunting Days

Ah! give me a sportsman,
In him you will find
A sweet combination of merits combined;
A friendship the same to the end.

Leave us the chase, where in harmony blending
Men of all classes ride on to the end;
Men become brothers, each brother contending,
Every true sportsman is counted a friend.

Mr. Taylor, who soon knew a good man when he met one, quite approved of Nancy's husband, and found him a thorough-going sportsman. Jack quite appreciated the mount Mr. Taylor gave him the first morning they went cub-hunting together.

Cubs were plentiful that season. Jack was glad to make the acquaintance of that well-known huntsman, Vernon, than whom there was no better throughout the length and breadth of England, Scotland, and Wales.

The master and the huntsman both appreciated each other, and all the hunt-

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servants thought there was not such another master in the world. Mr. Taylor, who was mounted on one of his famous weight-carrying hunters, grey in colour, was indeed a sight to make the heart of a hunting man rejoice. Keen as a boy on his first day out with the hounds was he, his cheery manner was so infectious that it did one good to be out that day!

The meet was at a quaint bridge close to an old mill. Nancy, her grandfather, and aunt were to drive over to the mill to have lunch with the miller and his sisters, who were quite notabilities in that part.

Unless the cubs took them too far away, Mr. Taylor and Jack were to join the luncheon party. Nancy enjoyed the drive through the beautiful lanes, and was charmed with the old mill and house. She thought how peaceful it all was, the picturesque old mill beside the river, fields stretching away for miles, the river, after passing the mill-dam, growing narrower and narrower, as it wended its way through the garden of the Mill House. The flowers in that old garden, how beautiful they were! The freshness and beauty of them excelled all others. The old

gabled house, with its many creepers in their vivid autumnal tints, stood as sentinel over the beautiful flowers, and the lawn stretching away down to the river. The miller and his sisters, how quaint they were! All three were past middle age, and yet how youthful they all seemed!

Emma, the elder sister, was small and slim; she had been a great horsewoman, and still dressed in a horsey style, wearing a tight-fitting black dress and jacket open at the neck, revealing a shirt-front and a tie. She was very sharp and smart in her conversation. Mary, the younger, was quite the lady of the house, with her dark hair parted in the centre, carried smoothly down either side of her face, then fastened in a coil at the back, over which she wore a lace head-dress. Emma disdained a head-dress. Mary's gown was soft and clinging, and finished off with a cascade of lace at the neck.

The widower brother was their idol—but Nancy thought that he looked more like a bachelor than a widower. Very quiet, almost prim, he was, but thoroughly respectable and good. His forefathers,

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who had been the millers of that part for many generations, must have been the same respectable, worthy men. A sporting element had been introduced into the family, by the runaway marriage of one of the long-ago millers with the pretty daughter of the squire of the place. Emma had inherited all the tastes of her great-grandmother, and, had she been given the opportunity, doubtless would not have followed so closely in the respectable traditions of her forefathers!

Nancy was charmed with the quaint room that served for living-room and kitchen combined. The comfort of it was great. The huge fire-place, on the mantelshelf of which stood an old brass tinder-box, the chimney corner, with its grandfather's chair, and beside that, fixed on the wall, a little table on which stood the miller's tobacco-jar, pipes, etc. The light fell from the window behind, so that the miller could read with ease. Everything was so polished and so bright. There was a grandfather's clock in one corner, with its solemn, never-hurrying tick. Not always solemn, however, was that old clock, for, if you wound it up

the right way, it played dances one after another, and many were the festive evenings it had kept going with its repertoire of dance music. Next to the clock stood the huge dresser laden with a beautiful old willow-pattern china dinner service, not of common earthenware, but the genuine thing, with gold blended with the blue. Teacups of the same hung from the hooks of the dresser. On a shelf of the dresser was a quaint brown jug, formed of a fat man, on whose head was a three-cornered hat, and on his knee a flagon of ale. The crown of the hat was the lid of the jug—Toby jugs, I think they are called. Captain Drake took the jug in his hand and sang, "Dear Tom, this brown jug that foams with mild ale," etc., etc.

Luncheon was laid in the parlour; a cold repast, with home-made bread, cakes, and wines. The gingerwine made by the ladies of the mill could not be beaten round the countryside. And who having tasted their dandelion wine could ever forget the delicate aroma of its flavour?

After luncheon they went into the old-world musty-smelling drawing-room, or

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best parlour, as they called it; a long, low room full of the relics of other years. There was the map of England worked in sampler-stitch by their grandmother, patch-work cushions, wax flowers, beaded banner-screens and footstools, wool-work chairs, and, last but not least, silhouettes of various members of the Willingale family. Over the mantelpiece was a water-colour of the squire's daughter who had "loved not wisely but too well."

Mrs. Taylor, who had known the miller and his sisters ever since she had married, asked Miss Emma to show Nancy her musical cat. Miss Emma said she would be delighted, "but the poor dear," she said, "was not in her first beauty, as the moth had got into her." She hoped the ladies would excuse its woe-begone appearance. The cat was wound up, and it played the fiddle, moving its skinny arms up and down. Captain Drake and Nancy enjoyed this insight into English rural life, and thought how different this old mill and its occupants were to anything they had seen in the New World.

Emma took Nancy into the fields and showed her Marquis, the horse which had

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been her great comrade in days gone by. She gave a great sigh as she told Nancy what glorious days across country they had had together. Nancy was much taken with the osier-beds surrounding the river at one part, never having seen anything like them before. When they returned to the house Miss Emma showed Nancy the masks, pads, and brushes she had won in her fox-hunting days. "Oh, my dear," she said, "when I hear the music of the hounds, and the sound of the horn, I feel I must jump on Marquis and be off and away. But I just go, dear, and put my arms round his old neck, and he puts his head on my shoulder, and we just weep together to think we are old, and have to stay at home. But I do love to see our Master, God bless him, our famous huntsman and his beautiful hounds, even if it does break my heart for a time. I expect, Mrs. Hethersett, you have not yet seen the beautiful lady of our county who rides as straight as a bird after the hounds, and is as good as she is beautiful—what ever some may say to the contrary. You know a very beautiful woman always has scores of lies told about her!"

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Nancy was quite sorry when the time came for them to leave the miller and his sisters, and she hoped she would see them again at some future time.

On the homeward drive the sun was setting, the bare branches of the trees were silhouetted against the clear sky. The river had overflowed and flooded the meadows on either side of the road, gulls and waterfowl rose and fell and skimmed the meadows. The floods gave the little village through which they passed "quite a Dutch appearance," the Captain said. Nancy, who was unaccustomed to see water by the roadside, thought the whole effect beautiful. Here and there they met some roadmender or labourer returning to his home, who respectfully touched his hat to the inmates of the passing carriage. Again, they met some old-world woman, with the short skirt, shawl, and black bonnet, with a clean, starched front surrounding the lined face, looking so clean and comfortable, who, when she saw the occupants of the carriage, bobbed her very best curtsey.

Nancy, who was not accustomed in her old home to see reverence shown by the

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poor to the rich, but who, since her time spent at Hethersett, had become used to it, understood the regret she had often heard her grandfather express at the want of reverence shown in the New World to age and position.

Jack promised Mr. Taylor to remain until after the first meet of the season, the meet of the Norfolk Hounds being some days later than that of the B—— Hounds. Many were the good runs he had with Mr. Taylor cub-hunting, and there was every prospect of a good hunting season, if the weather were favourable, the foxes being more plentiful than for the last two seasons.

The evening before the meet Nancy was much excited; she was so afraid that she might not be up in time to make an early start, as there was a drive of twenty odd miles to the Green, where the first meet of the B—— Hounds had been held for more than a hundred years.

The morning was all that could be desired from a hunting man's point of view, damp and misty, moisture falling off the trees, the air full of the dank moist smell of rotting leaves and mosses.

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Nancy enjoyed driving through the moist atmosphere. Here and there they passed a straggling rider, taking his horse along at a walking pace, second horsemen, ladies in their business-like short habits and covert coats, talking and laughing with their cavaliers.

They drove for miles along a road skirting the forest, then they turned off into country lanes, here and there passing a little inn with a gathering of yokels watching for the hounds to pass. Now and again they would see a quaint little church, or a picturesque old water-mill, until at last the meeting place was reached.

When Nancy and her party arrived on the green many carriages and people on foot were already there. A charming old English green it was, with its quaint inn, school, big common, and ponds. The very geese looked interested and important, as if they were quite the features of the place.

The Master, Huntsmen and Whips were all on grey horses, the pink coats of the riders on the grey horses making a very brilliant combination. A few mo-

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ments' grace was given to late comers, amongst whom was the beautiful lady of the county, who drove a break with four perfect black horses, handling them with the greatest skill. Accompanying her were her husband and several friends. She soon mounted her faultless hunter. Jack, who knew her well, asked Nancy if the horse and rider were not a picture? Nancy, who thought more of the rider than the horse, answered in the affirmative. Captain Drake said to his sister:—

"There are lovely women in all parts of the world, but, for a woman built on trim, taut, beautiful lines, with a lovely face as a figure-head, give me an Englishwoman."

"Hear! hear!" said Mr. Taylor.

The word was given, and off and away the huntsman and hounds go, followed by a long procession of riders, carriages, carts of all kinds, and people on foot and on bicycles. For real sport, this day is not the day the Master likes best, as there are too many outsiders present, and yet he would not wish to see this first meet of the season, with its old traditions, not attended well.

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Off and away the long procession goes to a wood near, where the huntsman knows there ought to be a fox. Patiently the crowd wait until they hear the huntsman say, "Eleu-in, boys, leu-in!" Off go the pack to search each hiding-place. Soon a dog fox is started, and he tries to dodge the pack. "Hold back, gentlemen. Do give the dogs a chance!" calls out one veteran. Off and away the fox steals out of cover. Hark, the cry is "Forrard!" then the music of the hounds begin; faster and faster goes the fox, as he hears the enemy getting closer to him.

Jack riding well, with an eye to hounds, like the true sportsman he is, sees the dashing figure in the pink coat well up in the first flight, and wonders if Nancy is seeing the fun, and hopes ere long to have her with him in the hunting field.

The pace is fast; too much so for many a horse in poor condition, the land being heavy and sticky after the recent rains. Fast the strength of Reynard is failing, as the good hounds follow closely after him, never slackening their pace. At last, after a forty-minutes' run, without slack-

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ening rein, they kill. A good omen indeed the Master thinks this smart run and kill on the opening day of the season!

The day was not a good one for the carriage folk. However, most of them had driven a long distance to the meet, so, when the hounds were off and away, they felt it hopeless to see more of the fun. Mrs. Taylor, with her party, drove to the quaint old inn, to have lunch, and give the horses a rest.

This inn was evidently erected about the time of Henry VIII. It consisted of a long frontage, in the centre of which, and under the first story, was an entrance which took you into a yard, or, more correctly, a quadrangle. Doubtless it had been the Manor House, and, some say, was built by Henry VIII. for one of his many natural sons. If the inn was quaint in its outward appearance, still more so was it in its interior. Narrow twisting staircases led to long, low rooms. In one of these was a table laid for luncheon. Antimacassars abounded in the room; every chair, small and large, had one on it, and bore testimony to the industrious fingers of some member of the

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inn-keeper's family, fingers perhaps long since at rest!

Captain Drake said he "was as hungry as a hunter." Nancy felt the same, so ample justice was done to the plain, homely meal. Why do chops, and eggs and ham always seem perfection when eaten at these country inns? Are they really better, or is one's appetite in just the right state to enjoy them?

Nancy enjoyed the drive home so much, the cool, damp air beating against her cheeks, and giving her such a glorious colour. After a whole day out with Nature how fit one feels, and how much one realises that life is indeed worth living! As Barry Cornwall says:—

"Nature is a friend that never deceives us. You may depend upon it that her roses will be genuine, and that the whisper of her trees will contain neither flattery nor slander."

## CHAPTER XIII.



## LIFE'S PROGRESS.

There are more Niobes weeping for the unborn than
for those slain by the arrows of the god.
Their ears are full of the murmur of rocking cradles.
Their very tears sew with salt the foundations of
their world.

Reading a church paper, I once came across these sentences; so well does the definition of a priest describe Harold Morton, Rector of Hethersett, that I must quote them here. "If all the clergy were sacerdotalists," Harvey began abstractedly, "Do you know, old man, what a priest means? It means a man who draws near to God. I say if the clergy were all sacerdotalists, it would not matter much what they were before they were ordained. That drawing near would knock out all vulgarity. But some of us seem to be trying to draw God with a cart-rope!"

So near had Harold Morton drawn to God that he was indeed a priest, and was therefore able to draw others to Him.

Life's Progress

Hethersett was fortunate in having such a man for its rector.

The marriage of Harold Morton and Helen Hethersett took place at the New Year. The whole village was astir that day, and triumphal arches were erected everywhere. When the bride and bridegroom drove to the station, the horses were taken out of the carriage, and men drew it to the station.

Helen looked very stately in her bridal dress, with her great height and patrician face, framed with its crowning glory of golden hair, with its natural waves and curls. Five bridesmaids attended her to the altar. Cynthia, of course, being chief bridesmaid, walked alone behind the bride, and was followed by the other four. Violet Wodehouse was one of the four, and glorious she looked in her tulle veil. The bridesmaids all wore veils and wreaths of white violets. Helen's wedding dress of white satin was beautifully embroidered with Madonna lilies, worked in white chenille and raised on the satin, the needlework having been done by some Sisters of the Church.

The Bishop of the diocese performed

the marriage ceremony, and had also officiated as Celebrant at the Holy Eucharist early that morning.

Needless to say, the family of the Hethersetts were delighted that Helen was to live in their midst, so there was no sadness mingled with the joy of that wedding day.

In the coming springtime Nancy hoped to become a mother. The joy of that expectation can only be known to those who have experienced it—the crowning joy of a woman's true love; the triumph of love, as I saw a piece of sculpture called, that has never passed out of my memory. It consisted of two figures, a man and a woman, holding above them the figure of an infant—a beautiful idea, was it not?

Nancy had plenty of money to buy the necessary garments ready-made, but she loved to make them, with the help of Lady Hethersett—poor Madonna without a child, weeping by herself sometimes for the unborn, yet keenly rejoicing with Nancy in her coming joy. The months flew swiftly by, and the child was born—a son and heir, too—so great were the rejoicings.

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Nancy lay very proud and contented with her boy in her arms, looking keenly to see a likeness to her dear Jack. Of course, she often saw it when others failed to. She loved, too, to see her grandfather sitting by the fire with the bundle of humanity in his arms. Joy it was to her when her Jack came and sat by her side, and together they looked at the wondrous little man, cuddling into his mother's breast, with the instinct that there was its Heaven. Jack felt almost jealous of his son and heir, so supremely happy was Nancy with their boy in her arms.

One day the old nurse discovered Master Baby had two dimples in his elbow, and these, she said, were "a sign of good breeding." Captain Drake turned to Nancy, and laughingly said:—"I suppose Jack has two dimples, hasn't he, Nancy?"

Evelyn, the sweet Madonna without a babe, loved Nancy's so, she spent much time with Nancy during her convalescent period. Altogether Nancy was quite sorry when the time came for Master Baby to be relegated to his own domain.

Strange to say, if Captain Drake was missing he was always to be found in the nursery. There he was as happy as a king with the king of Stowbedon Hall.

The baptism of the boy was a great event. Mrs. Cannon was allowed to hand the baby to Lady Hethersett, who was his godmother. The godfathers were Philip Ryley and Mr. Morton. Philip Ryley Drake were the names given to the son and heir of the Hethersetts.

About the same time a year ago, when the May blossom was falling and covering the ground with its snow-white petals, the burial of the poor stranger girl took place. After the baptism, Evelyn wandered round to the grave, and placed some violets and primroses on it; the violet, in its sombre hue, reminding one of death, the primrose leading one's thoughts upward to the resurrection of all things.

Violet Wodehouse and Philip Ryley had announced their engagement. The marriage was to take place in a few weeks. Evelyn was glad that her brother was to be married so soon. Hockham needed a mistress, and Evelyn knew how

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deeply Philip was in love with Violet. She felt also that his love was returned, but the depths and variations of Violet's temperament made her not feel so sure of her.

For some time past Lady Hethersett had noticed that Sir Adrian Travers appeared to have got over his love for Cynthia, and she fancied that he loved Violet Wodehouse not wisely but too well. Whether Violet herself felt this, and so allowed her engagement to Philip Ryley to be announced, Evelyn knew not.

Lady Hethersett was now much occupied in seeing that her brother's house was prepared for the coming of his bride. When at Hockham she drove to see some of her old friends, whom she used to visit before her marriage—her cottage friends, many of whom had known her from her birth. One old woman, who had known her from her babyhood, told her that she "could not make out the new rector's doings," and that she got quite a shock one Sunday morning, for they sang the days of the month, and she had never heard that before. "And they did sing them really, my lady," she said. "Lor

bless me! I said to Nanny Tuppen, are we all agoing to turn into the choir?"

"Well, Kitty," said Evelyn, "I suppose you mean that they sang the psalms. I hope you like to hear the days of the month sung? It makes the service so much brighter."

"Oh, yes, miss—my lady, I mean, begging your pardon—I 'ave got used to it. The Rector he's a fine kind man, he is, for I told him how I was getting a little 'ard of 'earing, and could not make out all that he was talking about, so he made me go to a seat near the old fowl, and ever since then I 'ears lovely."

"The old fowl, Kitty! Whatever is that?"

"Oh, don't you know? The big brass fowl with the great brass wings on which they put the Bible."

"I know, Kitty, what you mean. The brass eagle. It is called a lectern."

After a pause, Evelyn said:—

"Do you still make peppermint water, Kitty, and walk miles and miles selling it? I expect Hethersett Hall is too far for even you to walk."

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"Oh, my lady, may I come one day and bring you a bottle? I should like to see your home. I saw Sir Philip once, and you need never fret yourself about him—for he is a fine upstanding gentleman, he is. I hear you are a grandmother, too, and you not a mother either!"

"Mind you come and see me, Kitty," said Evelyn.

"Do you think we shall like the Squire's wife, my lady? She looks a rare beauty, she does, but makes me feel a bit afraid I think. But Squire, he's a rare game one he is, and likes something out of the common. Well, bless them both! I 'ope they will be 'appy."

The kettle was nearly boiling over the embers. so Kitty took the bellows and commenced to blow the embers into greater life. As Evelyn watched the old woman dressed in her black gown with the grey shawl pinned over her shoulders, the clean crinkled cap over her wavy silver hair, surrounding the weather-beaten face, with the still pretty blue eyes and the good features of the old lady, she wondered whether the many spicy tales she had been told about Kitty's youth were

true. At any rate, she had always found her very respectable, and she was certainly one of her favourite cottage friends. She liked her for roaming about out of doors, trying to sell the peppermint water she made, instead of living idly in her little cottage. The peppermint water she sold, which was made by herself from the herb she grew, certainly did no harm to those who bought it.

Kitty's one fear was that she might have to go to the workhouse when she could not do for herself. She had often told Evelyn that she would die directly she were shut up in a house. Evelyn was quite determined that she should never be taken from her own little home, and had made the Squire promise her this.

Kitty, having made Evelyn some nice hot buttered toast, poured out her tea, and Lady Hethersett insisted on Kitty herself having a cup of tea also, for she knew how the poor hate to be patronised. The reason all her poor friends loved her so was that she never forgot she was visiting, and was their guest for the time.

Just as she was leaving, Kitty said:—

"Do you remember old Mike, my lady?

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He used to have a meal at the 'all sometimes; the Squire was ever so good to him. Well, he was telling me the t'other day that a dear kind lady was leaving England, and going over the sea to some place far away—Stralia, I think he called it—thousands of miles away, he said, and if only there had been dry land instead of sea, he said he would walk any distance to see her again. But the water—that beat him, it did. Mike said she was a real good lady, she was, and he was quite upset he would see her no more."

Lady Hethersett remembered old Mike perfectly, and told Kitty how startled she had been one day by seeing him look into the window of the room where she was sitting—for to look at he was very unprepossessing. A rough, unkempt, red-haired Irishman, in rags and tatters, Mike always begged for vests and flannel shirts, as he suffered from the 'chitis. Also he used to beg a bit of new flannel for his old wife Bridget. One day when Mike came as usual to see Evelyn, he told her that Bridget would not need any more flannel, as she had gone away from him and his friends, and that he had given her

a grand wake, for he said she was a good wife to him.

Lady Hethersett told Kitty to send old Mike to see her at Hethersett, if he came that way again, and with that she took leave of her old friend. Kitty watched her drive away, and gave a great sigh. She wished that she was still the Lady of Hockham, instead of the beautiful girl the Squire would give them to be the Lady of the Manor of Great and Little Hockham.

Kitty had noticed the sadness that came over Evelyn's face when she mentioned that she was a grandmother and yet not a mother, so that evening, as the dusk was coming on, she gathered different herbs and flowers, the names of which she never revealed, and carried them in her apron out into the wood until she came to a tangled thicket that seemed to have four entrances into it. In the centre of this she made a small fire, and, after invoking the spirit of each flower to bless her dear lady, she threw each one separately on the fire, and prayed that she might have a son. Kitty watched each flower burn up, then she gathered the ashes into a little heap, over which she

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placed a rough cross of wood, meaning when the summer came, to plant some Madonna lilies on it—those tall white silver lilies with the golden heart—for Kitty believed that if the lilies bloomed then her prayer would be answered. At the time she did this she must not let anyone know, so she believed. Years after, when she was dying, she told Evelyn what she had done, and how the Madonna lilies had never bloomed. Evelyn thought that even the ignorant superstitions of the country folk were beautiful, for were not the Madonna lilies symbolical of the announcement to the Virgin Mother that she should bear a son, and that that son was to be the Saviour of the World.

The connection between the Wodehouses and the Ryleys had been of long standing. The Lord Wodehouse of that day had been guardian to Philip Ryley's grandfather and great uncle, sons of an eminent barrister, who had turned loyalist at the time of the American War of Independence—or rather had remained loyal to his old family traditions. Those ancestors of his who had given up their

estates in the Eastern counties had gone to the New World rather than take up arms against their King.

Loyal indeed they were, but, being men of sound judgment, they could not honestly countenance the wanton licence of the court, or the dishonesty of the King; neither did they believe it right to join Cromwell and his ranting followers, so they sought in the New World for greater freedom for their opinions, both religious and social, at the same time remaining ever loyal and steadfast to God, their country and their King.

In course of time the settlers in this New England desired to shake off the yoke of dependence on the Motherland. One of the descendants of those pioneers of 1620, a man whose name appears among those of the barristers and attorneys who addressed Hutchinson in 1774, and for five successive years was elected to the House of Representatives—and that against the opposition of such men as Colonel Mark Hopkins and Theodore Sedgewick—had the courage of his opinions against the majority, and at last, for his loyalty to the British Go-

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vernment, his estates were seized, and he was proscribed and banished in 1778, when he returned to the home of his ancestors. Soon after settling in England he was married to Frances Ryley, the Lady of the Manors of Great and Little Hockham. Both unfortunately died within a few months of each other, leaving two sons, the elder being only three years of age. These children, who inherited their mother's estates, also took her name. They were left to the guardianship of Lord Wodehouse. Now the granddaughter of that Lord Wodehouse and the grandson of Frances Ryley were to strengthen the bonds between the two families by their marriage.

The Hethersetts were in large numbers at the wedding. Nancy in the first blush of motherhood, fancied herself quite a dignified matron, and little realised how very girlish she looked, and that she would never be taken for a married woman—much less the mother of a bouncing boy. All agreed that the bride and bridegroom were as handsome a pair as one could wish to see. Lady Hethersett was perhaps the only one who did not feel quite

so happy about the marriage. However, she tried her best to smother unpleasant thoughts. "For after all," she said to herself, "Violet is such a queer girl. One never knows; the marriage may turn out splendidly."

On the return of Philip Ryley and his bride to Hockham there were great doings. The tenants and servants all had a fine time. All of them were very proud of their Squire, though many feared him greatly. The men gave his beautiful bride their heart's worship, the women were divided in their opinion of her. Old Mike turned up to the dinner, and Kitty Joyce was there, looking pretty and fresh as a daisy, in spite of her more than three-score years. Huge bonfires were lighted at night, and the rejoicings were the subject of conversation for many a long month.

After Many Months

## CHAPTER XIV.

## AFTER MANY MONTHS.

Those who break the law must suffer. It is no good to say that the temptation is strong; the penalty has to be paid.

A Persian fable relates that in the walls of Heaven there is a silver gate that is opened once in a thousand years to admit the souls of sinners who die unrepenting. So read Adrian Travers as he sat sipping his coffee in his den at Travers Court.

"Damnation!" he said, "it looks to me as if I shall be one of those souls, for I shall never repent. The one desire of my life is to get her—to hold her—to die with her. Nothing shall stop me, that I vow, until she is mine, body, soul, and spirit." With that he brought his clenched fist so violently down on the table that his faithful Boris hound, who had been dozing at his feet, got up and looked wistfully into his young master's eyes. But Adrian took no notice of the

dog, who, not understanding this new and unaccustomed mood of his master, returned to his comfortable quarters.

Sir Adrian wiped the beads of perspiration from his brow, and jumping up, said:—

"By Jove, I have it! I can't stand this uncertainty any longer. To-day I will make her speak to me, even if I force her. Oh, Violet! Violet! What cruel fate has made me hunger for you so?"

That terrible hunger for the possession of the one woman, be she maid or wife, that comes to some men some time in their lives, had eaten up all Sir Adrian's better nature, and left only the nature of the brute, made tenfold worse by the higher knowledge and intelligence of the cultivated man. Few men there be who do not know this, though some King Arthurs there are who pass scathless all their lives, never comprehending or understanding the mystery that plays havoc with the souls of Sir Lancelots and his kind. These men of the King Arthur type fail to realise that the temperaments of the Sir Lancelots and Guineveres are of a mystery beyond all analysis. Sir

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Adrian forgot those true words of Schopenhauer—perhaps he had never read them—which, if I remember rightly, run: —"The pain of an ungratified desire is small compared with that of repentance; for the former has to face the immeasurable, open future, the latter the past, which is closed irrevocably." How much is meant by "irrevocably"!

Sir Adrian knew quite well the point where he could waylay Violet, as generally she rode each morning alone, often in the direction of Hethersett Hall. Frequently he had met her, but Violet seldom stayed to converse with him. Adrian felt that in her heart she knew that he was mad with hunger for her. Hunger I say, as we dare not sully the name of love. Love is passion with reason, but his was passion without reason. "Intense love concentrated on one individual may develop to such a degree, that unless it is gratified all the good things of this world, and even life itself, lose their importance. It then becomes a desire the intensity of which is like no other; consequently it will make any kind of sacrifice, and, should it happen that it cannot

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be gratified, it may lead to madness, or even suicide. . . . However, it is not only unrequited love that leads frequently to a tragic end; for requited love more frequently leads to unhappiness than to happiness." Well, indeed, might Violet fear Adrian, with his impetuous, passionate and determined nature! The Fates were favourable to Sir Adrian this day, for sometimes Philip accompanied Violet, but to-day she was alone. As she walked her horse slowly through the wood, Sir Adrian came towards her. As she spoke to him he caught hold of the bridle of the horse, frightening the sensitive animal so that he tried to rear, but Sir Adrian was strong, and determined as he was strong. Violet felt inclined to give her horse the whip and make him plunge forward, then she feared that she might kill Adrian, so she sat there like a statue, and in a calm voice desired to know why he took such liberties with her horse.

Adrian, still holding the horse securely, said:—

"Violet, do you not understand that I am nearly mad for love of you. I can

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neither eat, sleep, or even ride, without longing to have you, and I would give up everything in this life and in the life to come if I might only feel you in my arms, and know that you were mine for ever and ever."

Violet looked at him in horror, and saw how deathly pale he was, with great beads of perspiration standing on his brow. She, with her curious temperament, realised and felt that all he said was true, and that subtle lure of sex seemed to fasten itself upon her, and pity, not anger, entered into her heart. The diversity of her temperament made it too hard for her to rebuke or snub him. She felt his sin was in loving her too much, and with her broad mind how could she realise that as a sin to her. The very depth of his love appealed to her passionate temperament.

Adrian pleaded that she would meet him in the Hockham wood that evening, when he knew her husband was to dine with the other Justices of the Peace at the county town. Violet, still loyal in her heart to her husband, but fearing to madden Sir Adrian, consented, never

realising the terrible consequences that would follow.

That August evening Violet, after her lonely dinner, wrapped herself in the folds of her heliotrope cloak, covering nearly entirely the white satin gown she wore. Her only head-covering was her magnificent ruddy gold hair. She felt as if she was not herself, but some other person.

Violet, who was pure as her namesake flower, and would have resented deeply the infatuation of an old roue or of an impure man, felt this love of Adrian's to be a true love, although a mad one. Therefore she could not bear to wound him. Altogether she was not herself, for the strong animal magnetism of Sir Adrian had so enveloped her magnetic temperament that she was scarcely responsible for her action in this matter. The Turks and others who keep their wives secluded from the world have more wisdom than the men of Christian lands, who allow their wives too much freedom, and thus expose them sometimes unmercifully to temptation that they are unable to withstand. That great variable-

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ness of temperament that is so often the cause of a woman's fall is more often than not the attraction that lures most men to her feet. As Schopenhauer says when speaking of women:—"Accordingly they have the first and principal qualities, but lack the secondary qualities which are often a necessary instrument in developing it."

As Violet passed through the little wicket gate that shut off the wood from the garden, she knew no fear, for she had ever loved to go out for long walks and rides alone; so now, as she passed into the wood, her only fear was Adrian, and of her promised meeting with him, for she failed to see what good that meeting could do. As she turned into another path in the wood she saw Sir Adrian standing there. His face was beaming as he hurried towards her, taking both her hands in his, and raining kisses upon them. At this she wrenched them from him.

"No, no, my Lady!" he cried. "You are mine now, and will bear with me for a time while I make believe you are really mine. My Queen, just here is a

lovely bower, in which I can enthrone you. Take down that lovely hair, Violet, or rather let me.'' He unloosened the massive coils of ruddy gold, and they fell around her like a mantle, almost to her feet. ''Now, my Queen,'' he said, ''continue, and I will set you on your throne all covered with the wild clematis! Let me, darling, throw back your cloak, so that I may see the dress of my Queen. Ah! White clinging satin! That is as it should be—fit covering for the beautiful body of my love!''

Adrian then placed her in one of Nature's bowers, all in a tangle of the wild clematis over her, and under her ragged robin and harebells—not bluebells, for they had passed away with the spring.

''Now,'' he said, ''beloved, to alter the words of Shelley, The past is Death's, the future is mine own.' ''

''Adrian,'' Violet said, ''what child's play is this?'' For she really feared him now, feared he was mad indeed. But she was anxious that he should not know her fear.

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"Child's play, my Queen? Not child's play, I assure you. Listen to this, and tell me if these lines be not true?

> The night has a thousand eyes,
> The day but one;
> Yet the light of the bright world dies
> With the dying sun.
> The mind has a thousand eyes,
> And the heart but one;
> Yet the life of the whole life dies,
> When love is done.

Tell me if that be not true, most beauteous one? You are my love and mine alone. Philip can never understand you as I do. You were never meant for him. Come to me, cling to me, and I will never let you go until the life of your whole life dies when love is done."

Violet knew not what to do. She feared to repulse him, for she feared he might kill her, so, to gain time, she begged him to return to the house with her, for she told him she feared the keepers might be round the wood after poachers, and they might get shot. Bitterly did she regret that she had consented to meet him, for now she felt convinced that he was mad, and that she was at the mercy of a madman alone in the midst of a wood. Sir Adrian said he

could hold his own against a gamekeeper, so that she need not fear. Then he gathered branches of clematis and covered her with them, saying that he would hide her, and no one but he should find her. The strain was becoming unbearable to Violet, when she thought that she heard voices, so she said to Adrian:

"Get me a spray of clematis to twine in my hair, then I shall be Ophelia to your Hamlet." She little thought that she was sending him to his death!

A few moments after she heard the voices closer, and then a shot. She dared not move for fear of being seen, and cowered further and further into the tangle of clematis and bushes. Then she heard the voice of the head keeper saying these words:—

"Damned sure I am that was a man we shot. I wonder where 'e be?"

Then she heard an underkeeper reply:—

"By all that's blue, right you are! But by Gawd A'mighty, man, this be the Squire of Travers Court, or strike me blind! Shot right thro' the 'ead, too, and dead as any wooden log!"

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"I say, Bill!" said the head keeper, "'as the shot passed thro' 'im, or is it in his skull? For if we can't find those shots it may mean 'anging for you and I. Even our Master's 'and will be agin us, as 'e forbid me ever to fire on a poacher chap, unless 'e fired the first shot. This be the worst night's work I was ever in, Bill!"

It seemed quite useless for the man to appeal to Bill, who was a slow-thinking yokel, and it appeared as if the discovery of their mistake had rooted him to the spot.

"The matter must be settled at once," said Brown, the headman, "whether we leave the poor young Squire's body 'ere to be found by others, or whether we take it up to the stables, and say we found 'im a-lyin' dead on our rounds after the poachers."

"You've got it, mate!" said Bill. "You've 'it the right nail on the 'ead this time! We'll just carry 'is poor body up to 'em stables, and tell 'em your yarn. I wish to Gawd that darned gun of mine 'ad gone and done a 'bust before ever it shot that poor innercent young gentleman!"

Violet lay still as death under the tangle of the bushes, afraid to breathe, and yet shivering inwardly. Her great fear was that the dogs would scent her out, but they seemed as much occupied with the dead body of poor Adrian Travers as their masters were. Although Violet could not see, she could hear them lifting up all that remained of Adrian, and thankful she was that in carrying the body to the stables, they had to go away from her hiding place. After allowing them some time to go on their way with their heavy burden, she crept slowly out of her hiding place, and then, swift as a deer, she ran out of the wood, across the lawn, and entered the house, as she had left it, by one of the French windows of the drawing-room. Not waiting to look round her, she quietly and swiftly went up the wide staircase to her own sitting-room. Her inclination was to throw herself into her big easy chair, just as she was, but prudence warned her to take off her evening dress, and put on her comfortable dressing gown. Then Violet felt as if she had been mad for the last two hours, or that it was all a dream. But

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as she put her hand up to her hair she felt some leaves of the clematis clinging to it, and this convinced her that the past hour or so had been not a dream but a terrible reality.

How Violet longed for her husband to return! Yet how thankful she was that he was not to return that night, for she felt that were he with her she must tell him of the doings of that evening. For the sake of the dead man's memory, and his life's friendship with Philip, she decided that, however great the cost to herself, the details of that evening must be locked away in her own heart for ever. Little did the gamekeepers think that there was a living witness to the shocking deed they had unwittingly committed that night.

After some time Violet rang the bell for her maid to bring her some coffee. When it was brought to her, she said:—

"Martha, I want you to sleep in the dressing-room to-night, for I feel so lonely with your master away."

Martha, who had acted as undernurse to Violet as a child, and then had risen to be lady's maid to her, simply thought

her mistress perfection, never seeing any fault in her, even when Violet was perhaps sometimes more exacting than she need be. She was quite delighted to know that her mistress needed her in the absence of her husband, and quite proudly she went back into the servants' hall and told them of the order she had received. All the servants agreed that "it was lonesome for the young missis to sleep all alone in that big rambling 'ouse, and no one even within call," as the butler remarked.

How Violet passed through that night passed her understanding, but towards morning she was so worn out that kindly Nature came to her rescue, so that when Martha came with her cup of tea she told the other servants that her "dear lady was sleeping like a h'angel!"

When Martha went to breakfast she noticed how quiet and awe-struck the others seemed. As soon as she was seated the butler said:—

"Well, Mrs. Martha, this is a shockin' thing that's 'appened."

"Lor-a-mercy!" said Martha, "don't tell me as anything's 'appened to the Master."

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"No, no, Mrs. Martha, h'our master's all right h'i 'ope, but the young master of Travers Court ain't. Last night Brown and Bill found 'im shot through the 'ead, dead as dead could be. No doubt some of 'em poacher chaps took 'im for our Squire."

"How awful, supposing it had been our master!" said one of the servants.

"After all," said Mr. Webster, the butler, "it's nearly as bad, for 'im they've killed is Master's great friend. No doubt 'e was comin' as 'e used, more particularly before Squire's marriage, to 'ave a game of billiards with 'im, forgetting the h'annual dinner of Justices was last night. The Squire 'e won't leave a stone unturned until 'e finds out what vagabond 'as done this 'orrible deed."

"Do our keepers suspect any man?" asked the housekeeper. "There's that bad lot of a son of Kitty Joyce's. He's been a trouble to her all his days, and he's vowed to have his vengeance of the Squire, so his mother's told me with tears in her eyes."

"Well, marm, as the culprit was not got in the h'act, h'i, for one, don't be-

lieve they will h'ever know who did the bloody deed.''

When Martha returned to dress her lady, of course she repeated the news of the tragedy to her. Violet was so overcome by it that Martha was quite concerned. ''Oh, my Lady, don't take it so to 'eart! Supposin' it 'ad been the Master, as all the men-folk thinks it was 'im they meant to kill.''

Philip was to be home to lunch. Violet longed for his coming, and yet she knew not how she would be able to keep to herself the details of last night's terrible tragedy.

Letters from Afar

## CHAPTER XV

## LETTERS FROM AFAR.

Wings have we..and as far as we can go
We may find pleasure; wilderness and wood,
Blank ocean and mere sky support that mood
Which with the lofty sanctifies the low.

Needless to say every effort was made to find the murderers of Sir Adrian Travers, but without success. The jury reluctantly gave a verdict of murder against "some person or persons unknown." Suspicion pointed to the son of Kitty Joyce being the most likely one to commit the murder, but there was not the slightest evidence against him. Violet, who knew only too well how Sir Adrian met his death, felt that silence on her part was best for the sake of the dead man.

Violet spent a great deal of her time with Nancy, for whom she had developed a great liking. Nancy often wondered when Violet was with her why she was so absent-minded, little knowing what a great burden Violet carried. Sir Philip

had noticed that Violet had lost some of her high spirits lately, and fearing she was too much alone, always encouraged her to spend as many of her days as possible with Nancy, whose bright healthy vitality seemed to infect most people who came under its influence.

One morning when Violet arrived at Stowbedon she found Nancy enjoying a budget of letters. One amongst the number was from her girlhood's friend and bridesmaid, the Rector's daughter, Kathleen, who had written to her, telling Nancy of a visit she had paid to her aunt in Melbourne. Nancy, thinking Violet might like to hear the letter, read it to her.

"My dearest of Girls (or must I say Matron now?) —Nancy, dear, it is difficult to realise that you are a mother! How I should love to see you playing with your beautiful Baby—for, of course, it is beautiful—'cela va sans dïre!' All babies are beautiful to mothers, are they not? Well, dear Nancy, give him a kiss for me and take one for yourself also. Now I am going to tell you of the glorious time I am having. As you know, dearest, we never have much money, so have to stay at home a great deal, and, as you know, make all our garments, or else go without them. An aunt of mother's, who, of course, is great-aunt to us, and has been quite a fairy aunt to me, came out from England to stay

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with us, and, strange to say, took a great liking to this individual, and wants me to travel about with her. Auntie gave me plenty of the needful, so that I could furbish up my wardrobe, and then I started with her for Melbourne—or, rather, she has taken a furnished house at the seaside, about an hour's journey from the city. There are very few houses here, and, the month being September, it is simply lovely! How can I describe the beauty of the bush to you? It seems cruel to tread on the ground, as it is just one living mass of orchids and flowering plants. The spider orchids are so beautiful. In a swampy place I came across pure white, red, and violet ones. I enclose a drawing the exact size of one I picked—but not any drawing can give you any idea of the subtle delicacy of the spider orchids. I wish I were a botanist, and could give you the names of all the wild flowers that grow here, but, Nancy, dear, you must be content. One day I went out alone. How I wished that you were with me. The whole earth was flooded with sunshine, and there was not any wind to disturb the repose of that ideal day. Well, I tramped along with the blue sky over me, and the sandy soil beneath me. I wended my way on and on, until I came to a wide expanse of moorland, gradually rising into high ground. The moorland was thickly covered with white heath (not heather), its long stalks closely packed with its wax-like bells. A beautiful vista rose before my eyes, and, oh, Nancy, dearest, it was most lovely. In the distant background was a range of mountains of a pale, heliotrope hue; in the foreground a perfect panorama stretched before me to the sea—the blue sea, so brilliantly blue to-day. In the middle distance was a road winding away until lost in the far distance. In the valley, between the sea and the hill of heath, there were

rich swamps of green and yellow; here and there a swampy pool reflecting all the colours surrounding it. Nancy, dear, I felt I would like to camp in that spot: it would indeed be living with so much living, breathing, growing life around one. Nancy, what a beautiful world this is, so full of Divine love and power! I gathered, in a few moments, twelve different kinds of wild flowers—the sweet-scented longue-folio, a species of wattle, pink heath, white heath, the delicate grass that children call 'fly-catcher,' wild boronia, and various other creepers and flowers, of which I regret I do not know the names. The ground was covered with various delicate orchids—heaps of parrot orchids and others—the low bushes of the scrub were laced over with an orange-coloured creeper. The different shades of yellow and red in the tinting of the undergrowth all combined to form a glorious mass of colours. I often wish I were a man, Nancy, dear, so that I could camp out in these beautiful places of Nature and live alone with her and her beauties for a time. Being only a woman, I should be afraid to do this alone—afraid of man. Just fancy a woman having to be afraid of man! Truly the stronger sex are terrible when they molest a poor, lonely woman. But they are not real men, are they, Nancy, but brutes! Auntie has promised to take me for a drive on the Black Spur, and I am looking forward to seeing the mountains. After my quiet home life this city seems very gay, but I expect in comparison with London, Paris, Vienna, and other big cities, it is very quiet. The girls here look so smart and well groomed. The shops are just too lovely. I like to see them, but I love the country, as you know. What lovely times we used to have on the river together before that naughty Mr. John Hethersett came and took you from us. We all miss dear

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Captain Drake and you so much. Father says the place does not seem the same without you both. The cottage is still called 'Drake's Cottage,' and an artist lives there now—so it is in safe hands. I wonder when we shall meet again? Will you ever come back to visit your island home? Perhaps some day, who can tell? Our love to Captain Drake and to you, and hoping, Nancy, dearest, that you will write soon,

Believe me, as ever,
Your loving friend,
KATHLEEN."

"Thanks, Nancy," said Violet. "What a fresh, bright nature your friend must have to love all Nature's beauties so. It makes one long to go and see these things for oneself. Do you know, Nancy, sometimes I think I shall ask Philip to go for a long sea-voyage. I am afraid he is too much of a stay-at-home to care to go!"

"It does one good to travel," said Nancy. "It teaches one so much. Of course I have only had a little experience of travelling, but it does enlarge one's mind. All the same I am quite contented to stay here in this lovely home of mine. The hard part will be that we shall have to live in London a good deal when Jack gets into Parliament."

"I am just longing for the hunting

season to come round. Are you going to hunt this season? I wish you would come out with me."

"I may. But Jack is not anxious that I should. He says that he will always be worrying about me. Shall we go for a ride now, Violet? It is such a lovely morning. We can have a good gallop over the moor, and you can return to lunch with me. Jack and I will ride back with you this afternoon."

After Violet and Nancy started for their ride, Violet said:—

"Let us go to Hethersett, for I have not been there for some time. Evelyn always makes me feel more contented with myself. I wish I could get the people at Hockham to love me as they do her. They just worship her, and I feel they only put up with me for Philip's sake. The men are all right, but it is the women-folk I mean."

"All people who know Evelyn well do almost worship her. Only those who know her slightly think her a little haughty and stand-offish in manner," said Nancy.

"If I can persuade Philip to go for a sea trip I shall ask to take Cynthia with

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us. I should like to have her with me, and she would love to travel. Helen and Cynthia are so unlike each other, are they not?''

After a splendid gallop over the moor they came to Hethersett Hall, and found Evelyn much interested in reading the sermons composed by Arthur Somerville when he was ten years old. Mrs. Somerville had written them down at the time he preached them, and she had lent them to Lady Hethersett to read. Lady Hethersett told Nancy and Violet that really the sermons were wonderful for so young a child to have written, and how sad it was that his father professed to be an Atheist. But, as Bacon says:—''A little knowledge inclineth man's mind to atheism, but much knowledge brings his mind back again to a belief in God.'' ''So,'' said Lady Hethersett, ''I trust that Mr. Somerville may see things differently. Perhaps, who knows? his own child may teach him many truths.''

Both Nancy and Violet begged Evelyn to read the sermons to them. Lady Hethersett consented, saying:—

''The text Arthur has chosen for this

sermon is, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ":—

"Supposing we were going to have a race, and we had a great many parcels in our pocket, naturally we should take them all out. So in the great race of life, if we see another Christian bearing a burden that is a great weight to him, so we ought to sacrifice ourselves to help him to get on in the race. We may not do good to only one, but to many of our fellow Christians, and many a bad sinner may at last, by our help, get to know Christ. There may be an excuse for those heathens in lands far away, where men who ought to go and tell them of Christ have not yet gone. But for us Christians who have, from our birth up, been taught the law of Christ. there can be no excuse. Although many bear the name of Christian I fear they act unworthily of that name, even the poor heathens, in their acts of unselfishness to each other, putting us to shame. The selfishness that goes in this country could soon be stopped if each one sacrificed themselves for another. Oh, my dear friends, if we were only to bear in mind the unselfishness of Christ, when He dwelt here on earth, I think we should all try to bear each other's burdens. Ah, how little we think of the burden He bore for us, when He hung on the tree. How patient He was as He bore the cruel nails going through Him. But, even then, He prayed to His Father to save the men who were putting Him cruelly to death. He is our pattern, oh! but how few copy Him! My dear brethren, may we each of us think more deeply of the words of my text, and so bear one another's burdens, and so please Christ."

"My word!" said Violet. "What wonderful thoughts for so young a child."

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"Yes," said Lady Hethersett. "That is a real sermon on Socialism—or rather I should say that that is real Socialism. Mrs. Somerville tells me that he could neither read nor spell when he made up these sermons. Indeed he could not read properly until he was twelve years of age, and now does not spell very well. She also told me that the questions he used to ask puzzled many clever people. It appears that Arthur could not think how his mother would spell 'Ah.' He was most anxious that that expression should not be omitted. Mrs. Somerville says, of course, there are many mistakes in expression, but she just wrote down the sermons exactly as he preached them. Arthur is a very nice-looking, refined boy, with golden hair, a lovely complexion, and nice blue eyes, with dark eyelashes. Do you girls care to hear the other sermon I have, or have you had enough sermonising for to-day?"

Both Nancy and Violet asked Lady Hethersett to read the other sermon, so she commenced, saying:—

"This appears to be a Lenten sermon. Now I remember Mrs. Somerville told me

that when Arthur chose the text, she tried to persuade him to choose another, as she thought the subject too difficult for him. However, he would not alter his text, which was, 'When ye fast be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast.' "

"Dearly beloved brethren, the Lenten season is now here. Be not a hypocrite, for verily they will be punished hereafter, but be open and candid to God your Father. Oh, my dear brethren, blessed are they that sacrifice themselves to God, and give up those things they are most fond of—sugar, you know, you should give up in Lent. Not only in this season of Lent must you give up yourself to God, but keep it on until the end of thy life. Do not as the hypocrite does—he says much, but does little. For when the Judgment Day comes we shall have to appear before the glory of God. We shall hear the trumpets coming from the Heaven, far and wide; then it will be plainly known who has lived as a hypocrite, and who has not. Then those people who have not denied themselves the pleasures of this life will be denied by God the pleasures of the eternal life. In allowing themselves the pleasures of this life they have forgotten to keep Heaven's golden gate in view. Far be it from me, my dear brethren, to say that, by God's mercy and love, the baddest sinner may not at last enter Heaven's golden gate—but if we wish to enter Heaven's golden gate ever must we keep Christ in our sight, and, as He was our pattern here on earth, He is like the roller going over the rocky roads in front of us

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for our poor trembling footsteps to follow in the way, so must we copy Him in His forty days' fast in the wilderness, for so did He sacrifice Himself for us. Oh, brethren, may we think what our Saviour suffered for us with the cruel nails driven into His holy, pure hands. He sacrificed Himself to take us out of the hands of the devil. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I cannot do better than beg each one of you to think of the words of my text, "When ye fast be not as hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast."

"Well, really," said Nancy, "it is wonderful for so young a boy to think such thoughts."

"Mrs. Somerville told me," said Lady Hethersett, "that where they lived previously the clergyman was a very able man, and had a special gift for taking children's services and holding their attention. Many of the expressions her boy had used he had taken from the Rector, but the feeling of the matter was his own. Now, you girls must remain and have lunch with us. The Squire was saying only last night that he had not seen Violet for some time. Cynthia has gone over to see Helen."

During lunch Violet told Sir Philip and Lady Hethersett that she hoped to per-

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suade her husband to take her for a sea trip, and that if he agreed to go she wished Cynthia might go with them. She said that she wished much to see Japan before it was too much altered by Western civilisation. Sir Philip said that if Cynthia were willing to go she had his consent.

"But," he added, "what shall we do, Madonna, without any birds in our nest? We must console ourselves with the grand-children."

Violet asked Lady Hethersett to come and spend a long day at Hockham soon, as the old women on the estate were wearying to see her, and Evelyn promised to do so. Then they rode back to Stowbedon to get Jack to ride with them to Hockham.

They found Jack and Captain Drake sitting in the smoking-room, the Captain nursing the son and heir, whom he had waylaid as the nurse was taking him for his afternoon walk. Violet, who was no lover of children, just gave him a passing glance. Of course, directly he saw his mother the grandfather was nowhere.

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"Now, Nancy, I call that mean of you to come in just now and rob me of my great delight. When you are not here he won't go to anyone from me," said Captain Drake.

"Well, grandfather, dear, I am just off again, and am going to take Jack with me. So come along, husband mine, and we will ride part of the way to Hockham with Violet."

## CHAPTER XVI.

## PICTURES AND POETRY.

Dwells within the soul of every artist
More than all his efforts can express.

"A picture is a poem without words."

"A picture is an intermediate something between a thought and a thing."

Maurice Somerville had been much occupied lately in painting Nancy Hethersett with her son and heir. The latter was now a glorious boy; a perfect little Hercules, with his mother's dark blue eyes and masses of fair curly hair.

As Nancy found it more convenient to give Mr. Somerville sittings in her own house, he had fitted up a temporary studio there. Captain Drake's greatest delight was to watch the progress of the painting of his grand-daughter and great-grandson. Also he always managed to keep the boy good. Mr. Somerville never overtaxed the sitting powers of his Imperial Majesty. The picture was to be a large one. Sir Philip Hethersett had

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commissioned Mr. Somerville to paint it for him to hang in the saloon of Hethersett Hall with the other family portraits. Maurice Somerville had a special gift for painting women and children; he greatly disliked painting portraits of men, although he had promised to paint a portrait of Captain Drake for Jack and Nancy.

The great delicacy of his painting, so directly inspired by the actual life itself, and in depicting so truly the subtle charm of women and children, made his canvases, with their beautiful colouring, a joy to look upon. Every artist knows how difficult it is to truly paint likenesses of children, giving them just enough expression to prevent them looking vacant, without losing the suspicion of character to come, and, on the other hand, not to overdo the expression, thus giving the child-face a look beyond its years. Maurice Somerville, who had lived with, and studied, his own beautiful family from the time they first lay on their mother's arm, taking their natural nourishment, studying and watching the different steps of their babyhood—the first smile, the

happy chuckle of the youngster, to the time when they held out their arms with delight to be taken into those of "Da—da"—who could know better than he the insidious charm of babyhood? who knew better than he how the worries of life's daily care could be forgotten by entering into the pleasures of the children and turning oneself for the time being into a child again?

So who more fitted than Maurice Somerville to represent on canvas the subtle impression of children?

Having promised to paint a picture of Captain Drake, Mr. Somerville often studied the the old man while the picture of Nancy and her boy was progressing. The more he saw of the Captain the less he regretted his promise, for truly if childhood be beautiful, so is old age—old age that is a sequel to a kindly, well-lived life. The battles that have been fought, the sorrows that have been experienced, and the joys that have brightened such a life all go to make a fine study of character in the aged. So Maurice Somerville did not repent his promise.

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In the previous year's Academy he had exhibited a large painting of Violet Ryley. That picture was the picture of the year, and the talk of fashionable London. The subdued delicacy of the colouring and the dress of soft white satin brought out the richness of Violet's own colouring, the ruddy glow of her hair, her matchless complexion, the grey-blue eyes, with the dark lashes and brows. Mr. Somerville had caught that indescribable expression in her face that made her so dangerous to the other sex. All London was puzzled to know where this beautiful woman had hidden so long. The artist had depicted Violet standing in a wood, with a long vista of shadowy background, the sun shining threw up her colouring, the lights and shadows in the soft folds of her satin gown made the tangled moss and violets that she carried stand out in great relief.

One morning while Maurice Somerville was engaged painting Nancy, the subject of poetry arose in conversation. Nancy told him what a most wonderful memory her grandfather had for poetry. Lady Hethersett, Mr. Morton, and Helen had

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driven over that morning to see how the picture progressed. Quite a pleasant discussion arose over the charm of poetry. Maurice Somerville said:—

"Poetry seems to me to be thought and emotion transformed into words; not the only manifestation of thought and emotion, but that which in youth is perhaps the most valuable, and certainly the most accessible. It is the fit nurture of fancy and imagination."

"Yes," said Harold Morton, "there are better and higher grounds upon which the careful study of poetry should be advocated. The education of this age has a tendency to inspire self-conceit and self-will by fostering vanity. Indeed there are some schemes in which intellect and intellectual cultivation are all in all. Love of nature, of humanity, and of reverence for God find but scanty recognition, or are eliminated as troublesome superfluities. Now the poet is he who is first of all remarkable for his love of Nature and love of God. Poetry, like all real art, is unworldly; it teaches us that the things unseen are the things real, that they are the only realities. Poetry shows us the actions

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and the thoughts of men elevated and transfigured, and men themselves inspired by a higher and nobler life than the life of this world."

"Good gracious, Harold!" said his wife. "You have given us quite a sermon on poetry. You know how little I can understand poetry. I much prefer prose."

"Well, my wife, you lose all the romance of literature by not caring for poetry. What do you think, Somerville?"

"I think a great deal you have said about poetry is true, but I do not think it always has the elevating influence you attribute to it—indeed I am sure very often it has a luxurious, sensuous effect—certainly on some temperaments."

"Byron, Pope, and sometimes Tennyson may, on some minds, have that effect, but Milton, Longfellow, Wordsworth, Bryant, and others too numerous to mention, lift one up from Nature to Nature's God. And then, again, I must mention Dante. However," added Mr. Morton, "we start from such a different standpoint, Somerville, that we should never agree. I have no doubt that you agree with me that poetry should always be

taught to children. I insist on the children in our schools learning poetry by heart. We can but scatter the seed. To those who are impatient for the harvest even blossoms may seem an unnecessary frivolity, but then we can get no fruit without them."

"I cannot profess to argue as well as Morton and you, Somerville, can, but this I know," said Captain Drake, "that poetry has been a great joy to me all my life. Often when I sit smoking my pipe in the gloaming I repeat to myself poetry I learnt in my young days, and somehow when doing so I feel quite young again."

Lady Hethersett congratulated Maurice Somerville on the progress of the picture, and the speaking likeness to both mother and child, and felt sure Sir Philip would indeed be pleased with it.

"Who is taking my name in vain?" said Sir Philip, who just entered the room. "Pleased with the picture, did you say? Indeed I am, Somerville, more pleased than I can express. Don't you think, Captain, that Somerville should

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paint us two old grandfathers together? How comical we should look!''

''You forget,'' said Captain Drake, ''I am great-grandfather. Why, bless my soul! you are quite a boy to me.''

''By-the-bye, Somerville,'' said Sir Philip, ''are you not getting a bit tired of painting the Hethersett family?''

''No, indeed, Sir Philip. How can I weary when I have such lovely models. I would like to paint a picture of Lady Hethersett as the Madonna, and the boy as Christ. Truly I feel I should outdo the old Masters, for their models always appear to me to have been either coarse or insipid.''

''Well,'' said Sir Philip, ''if you can get Lady Hethersett to sit I have no objection. Indeed I should be delighted to have such a representation of my dear wife. But we must be going, Evelyn, as the horses are freshly clipped, and it is turning very cold and frosty. So good-bye everyone, until our next meeting.''

## CHAPTER XVII.

## AFTER SOME YEARS.

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward into souls afar,
  Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift of grace surpassing this—
  "He giveth His beloved sleep?"

Ay, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeble man,
  Confirmed in such a rest to keep,
But angels say—and through the word
I think their happy smile is heard—
  "He giveth His beloved sleep?"

E. B. Browning.

Life! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
  'Tis hard to part when friends are dear—
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;
  —Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time;
Say not Good Night—but in some brighter clime
  Bid me Good Morning.

A. L. Barbauld.

Seated in a deep oriel window in the west wing of Stowbedon Manor is our old friend Nancy—looking even more

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beautiful as the matron than when we first knew her in her girlish beauty. Her eyes just now have a pathetic, anxious look, as ever and anon she turns them to look upon her grandfather, who is sleeping peacefully in the large four-post bedstead, surrounded by every comfort and luxury that wealth can give him. Nancy knows that before many days are over he will be sleeping his last long sleep. A gradual passing away indeed it is, without pain, his mind being clear and keen as ever. Both Jack and Nancy feel that his death will leave a terrible void in their lives, and in the lives of their little ones, who now number six, and who have been the great joy of the old man's departing years. Jack and Nancy know that that void can never be filled up for them.

Nancy fancied her grandfather stirred, so rose from her seat to look at him. The Captain was indeed awake, and his eyes beamed with love as Nancy drew closer to the bed, and bending over him kissed him.

"Nancy, dearest," he said, "what a lucky old fellow I am to have so much

love surrounding me. Your dear husband is a good son to me, and as to the youngsters, you know what joy they have given me. The doctor tells me that my signal for sailing may be flown at any time, and I am quite ready to hoist the 'Blue Peter' in response, and slip my moorings."

Nancy, who strove to keep back her tears, buried her face on her grandfather and kissed and kissed him over and over again, saying:—

"Darling, have you not been everything to me, father, mother, sister, and brother, all in one, giving to me and mine all the love of your great heart, and we can never give you enough in return. But now I must remember that I am your nurse, and it is time for you to have your beef-tea."

"Just one little thought more, Nancy. I have some words in my mind, but I forget who wrote them. Let me see if I can remember them rightly. 'We sail the sea of Life. A calm one finds, and one a tempest, and, the voyage o'er, Death is the quiet haven of us all.'"

"How wonderfully you remember,

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grandfather. I wish I had so good a memory. Now for the beef-tea, and—ah! here comes Baby."

The nurse came in, bringing the four-months-old baby girl to have her tea. As the nurse left the room, Nancy said to her grandfather:—

"Now, dearest, take your tea while Baby has hers, and then she shall lie on your arm for a moment."

Miss Baby gurgled and cooed on her mother's lap, having a full, satisfied feeling of content, after having drunk her meal down as quickly as ever she could. Nancy, looking from her babe, to her grandfather, thought how beautiful is life, both in its beginning and its ending. Just for a moment did she lay the baby in the old man's arms, and he, turning his still beautiful eyes up to Nancy, said:—

"I feel I can say with Simeon of old, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

The baby, having no respect for old age or serious thoughts, grabbed the old

man's beard so viciously that her mother had to remove her.

Presently the nurse came to carry Miss Baby off to bed, while the other children, who came in with her to say good-night, crept softly in to kiss their mother and Captain Drake. The eldest boy, a sturdy boy of ten, said:—

"Grand-daddy, do get up to-morrow and come with me to see the new puppies. They are such funny ones."

Captain Drake smiled, and patting the boy's head, said:—

"All right, little man. Take care of your mother—always take care of your dear mother. Good-night, little ones, and God bless you all."

The children toddled quietly out. Then Nancy shook her grandfather's pillow up, saying:—

"Now, dear one, you must rest, for I fear the children may have tired you."

"No, sweetheart, no. Little ones never tire me. Look at that lovely sunset, Nancy. It comforts one, dear one, so to see such glory at the end of the day, before darkness covers all. It makes one feel that at the end of one's life the glory

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shall be all the brighter. You remember, Nancy, dear, that lovely poem of Tennyson's—or rather, hymn I call it—'Crossing the Bar.' I think I can say it to you, but I may forget. Let me see.

Sunset and evening star
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.
But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep,
Turns again home.
Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark.
For tho' from out our bourne of Time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

By the time the old man had finished reciting the poem the tears were streaming down Nancy's face. She kissed the dear old man, and said he must not talk any more. The doctor had told her to humour him in every way, as nothing mattered now.

The days passed away, and with them the vitality of the old man gradually left

him, until he nearly slept all the day. The end came so peacefully in his sleep that his dear ones could scarcely believe that he had passed away. "So He giveth His beloved sleep." R.I.P.

Requiem

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## REQUIEM.

There comes a mist and a weeping rain,
And nothing is ever the same again.

Aunt Mary and Mr. Taylor came down to Stowbedon for the funeral. The body of Captain Drake was lovingly laid to rest in the same grave with his wife and daughter, whose bodies had been brought from that little isle in the sunny south. This kindly act of Jack Hethersett's had given the Captain much joy and peace. He rejoiced greatly to know that he would be buried in the same grave as his dear ones.

Nancy's father had been drowned at sea, before his child was born, and soon after his wife joined him in the other land, leaving Nancy alone with her grandfather. Now Nancy felt by the loss of her grandfather that she had lost father and mother as well. Sir Philip Hethersett, too, felt deeply the loss of Captain

Drake, as indeed all did who knew the genial old man. As Emerson truly says: —"The world is upheld by the veracity of good men. They make the earth wholesome; they who lived with them found life sweet and nutritious."

Perhaps the one who felt the loss of the old man the most was his eldest great-grandson, to whom he had been play-fellow, comrade and hero, all in one. For some time the boy fretted so that all were anxious about him, but Time, the great healer, restored him to his usual flow of spirits, and his happy, contented disposition. Strange to say, he evinced no desire to follow in Captain Drake's footsteps and go to sea. The boy was quite a Hethersett, and inherited all their sporting instincts.

The second boy was always making believe that he was a sailor, never so happy as when sailing his toy boats on the lake of Stowbedon. His greatest delight was to dress up as Nelson, who was his hero, and give his orders to his brothers and sisters. So Jack and Nancy decided that he should enter the Navy.

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A few days after the funeral of Captain Drake, Mrs. Taylor was looking through her brother's papers, when she discovered some writing she recognised as her mother's. The ink was faded, but it was still possible to read the writing, and Mrs. Taylor saw it was a poem her mother had composed on the sailing away of her brother as a boy in the ship on which he was apprenticed. She called Nancy to her, and together they read the lines, and tears came into their eyes, as they read, between the lines, the anguish the mother felt at parting from her dear and only son.

"No wonder," said Nancy, "that Grandfather loved poetry so, when his mother could write such a beautiful poem. He must have inherited his love of poetry from her."

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Taylor, "dear mother doubtless was not a great poetess, and those lines might not bear severe criticism. At any rate they express fully a mother's deep feeling on seeing her only son sail away from her to enter life's tempestuous sea."

"Auntie dear," said Nancy, "sometimes I feel as if I cannot live without him. I know I have my other dear ones, but, oh, Auntie! it has broken such a big thick link in my chain of life."

Aunt Mary knew what the loss of her grandfather meant to Nancy, and said how true those lines were:—

There comes a mist and a weeping rain,
And nothing is ever the same again.

Nancy, however, had very little time to fret her heart away, for Jack, who was now secretary to one of the Cabinet Ministers, had to live the greater part of the year in London. Of course Nancy was much with him, the children remaining at Stowbedon. Nancy hated the London life. All who were in the know said that Jack was a rising politician, and would some day make his mark in the House. He was deeply interested in the Labour Party, and thought highly of their representatives in the House. Jack's old favourite author, John Ruskin, especially his book, "Unto This Last," had done much to form his Socialistic feelings, also Henry George's "Progress and Poverty," Kingsley's "Alton Locke," and last, but

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not least, Jack felt that all true Christians must be Socialists—that is in its true meaning—not in its perverted, ignorant form.

Philip Ryley was also making his mark in the political world, and Violet was fast becoming a leading political hostess, her salon being much sought, and attended by all the great men of the day. Both she and Nancy hailed with delight the closing of each Parliamentary session, when they were able to return to their delightful homes in Norfolk.

Mr. Morton still stayed on at Hethersett, though now he was Rural Dean and Canon of Norwich. He also held, with Jack Hethersett, that the Church and Socialism must fight together for the good of the whole world. Helen, his wife, shared with him the duties of the parish, guiding and ruling his household as only a good woman can.

Sir Philip Hethersett began to feel the old age microbe forcing itself upon him, although he was still hale and muscular.

Old Tom Cannon was dead. His widow lived on with Jack and Nancy, very

weak and frail, but happy in a contented old age.

Cynthia, having married an officer in an Indian regiment, was now living in India.

Evelyn, the Madonna, the gentle lady of Hethersett, was being indeed a veritable mother to all the grandchildren. A short time ago she was summoned to the death-bed of Kitty Joyce.

Kitty had made the woman who was nursing her carry her little bedstead out into the wood, surrounding her cottage. She had laid herself on it there, as she said that her spirit could never pass away to God while she was in four walls. Evelyn found her lying under a canopy of beech trees, the ground thickly covered with bluebells, anemones, and bracken. The old woman was conscious to the last. Joy beamed in her still blue eyes as she saw Lady Hethersett coming towards her.

"Oh, my dear lady!" she said. "For you to come to the poor old woman—God bless you for it! I love you so, my lady, and will you forgive the liberty—if I ask you to kiss me before I go."

Requiem

Lady Hethersett bent over her old friend, and gave her the kiss she longed for.

"Look, my Lady," said Kitty, "I put my two hands together so, and pray the good God to bless you, and let me meet you again in Kingdom Come."

The voice of the old woman was really quite strong to the last, and when the Rector of Hockham came to administer the last rites of the Church to his aged parishioner, he was quite astonished to find how audibly she joined with Lady Hethersett and himself in the beautiful service.

Strange indeed it seemed to offer before God the one great sacrament instituted by Christ in Nature's own Cathedral, the branches of the beeches forming the roof, their trunks the aisles, the tesselated pavement being composed of bluebells, anemones, mosses, and young shoots of the bracken, the choristers God's own beautiful songsters.

Towards evening Kitty, holding tightly Evelyn's hand, fell into a sleep, and, just as the sun was saying his farewell to the day, Kitty Joyce's spirit

passed away. Evelyn gathered some of the wild flowers, and, placing them on her old friend's body, in the form of a cross, gave all that remained of Kitty Joyce one last kiss, and returned to her home, leaving the nurse and Kitty's son to carry the body back into the cottage.

As Evelyn drove back in the dusk to her home she thought how weird a death-bed was that of Kitty's. Beautiful in its weirdness was the belief of the woman that her spirit could not pass so easily when surrounded by roof and walls, as in the open air.

> Into the silent land!
> Ah! who shall lead us thither?

The only blot on the happiness of those whose lives we have followed for a period was the passionate adoration of Maurice Somerville for Violet Ryley. Dangerous indeed it was for two such temperaments to meet. Terrible as Violet's first experience of unhallowed love had been, that experience had really been of great use to her in helping her to check the too ardent admiration of men. It is not the tragedies that

Requiem

make life, but the every-day doings; the little things that make the whole, and, more often than not, become the actualities, stirring and eating into the very depths of the human soul.

THE END

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